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## SOCIAL ETHICS



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## OUTLINES OF A DOCTRINE OF MORALS

BY

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*TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN*



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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE author of this little book, Professor Theobald Ziegler, fills the Chair of Philosophy in the University of Strassburg. These lectures however are no part of his academical course, and do not lay claim to academical prestige. They are popular addresses delivered at Fränkfurt-on-the-Main to a general audience of cultured men and women, and published last year under the title of *Sittliches Sein und Sittliches Werden* (Moral Life and Growth). They were printed very nearly as they were spoken; and in translating them I have endeavoured as far as possible to preserve the style of oral discourse, in the hope that thereby the book may the more readily commend itself to a similar audience in this country.

In Germany, Professor Ziegler is favourably known by his earlier work *Geschichte der Christlichen Ethik*, published in 1886, in which he claims for the religion of Jesus, as its distinguishing characteristic, that it is an ethical religion—a religion of conduct, not of dogma. His theory of Social Ethics, the outlines of

which he sketches in these lectures, is a doctrine of development, in which morality is regarded as a social product, not resting exclusively either on authority or on intuition, but as founded on the facts of human nature, and on a combination of the varied influences that by their interaction determine human character and conduct. In this respect it may be said to be an eclectic doctrine, aiming at the union of apparent antagonisms in a harmonious and progressive movement towards the Supreme Good. But the Greatest Happiness principle is here accepted only in its widest significance as the expression of the highest ultimate Well-Being of humanity; and hence the author must not be classed with the *mere* utilitarian school of philosophers,—Hobbes, Bentham, and James Mill. He has more in common with John Stuart Mill; and his doctrine may fairly claim kindred with the views indicated by Bishop Butler in his famous Sermons at the Rolls Chapel. While morality is held to be a product of society, developed in the individual by custom and habit, by the instinct of imitation, by the family relations and by the force of public opinion, the authority of conscience and the sacredness of duty are also duly recognised. Professor Ziegler's treatment of the subjects of mixed motives, collisions of duty, etc., and of the relations of morality to religion, art, and politics, is interesting and suggestive. Finally, recog-

nising the progressive character of morals, he looks forward with assured and optimistic faith to the ultimate triumph of the Good.

But, as the Professor himself says in his own prefatory note: 'Let the little book tell its own tale. It is not intended to edify or to proselytise, but mainly only to teach and explain. Is that so entirely superfluous?—is the contradiction altogether harmless which we so often find between what we have been taught from childhood about moral questions and duties, and what we practise in daily life, or see our neighbours practise?—these are questions that may well be asked. Possibly answers to both may be found in the following pages which may contribute to clearness and truth on the subject. If so, the little work will have fulfilled its purpose.'

The translator is responsible for the illustrative quotations from other authors which appear in the notes.

H. H. S.

LENNOX LEA,  
*December 1891.*



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*Daniel Benjamin Brinkley,  
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## LECTURE I

### THE PROVINCE AND METHOD OF ETHICS HISTORICAL SURVEY

WHEN I undertook to discuss ethical questions and problems with you here, I had not thoroughly realised the difficulty of such a task, otherwise I could not fairly have taken it in hand. The difficulty is twofold. In the first place, there is the danger of falling into the tone of a preacher. And yet in this respect I feel, at least in speaking to you, with Faust when he says: 'I do not flatter myself that I can teach anything which would improve or reclaim mankind.' And you moreover would resent—and rightly resent—such an attempt. But, on the other hand, if we ask what is the province and what the pretensions of ethics, the most celebrated representatives of this science assure us that its task is to answer the question: 'What ought I to do?' Or if we put the question in another form, viz. 'What is Good?' that is just the same thing. For, since we certainly ought to do what is Good, he who explains to us what is Good is simply telling us what we ought to do. Therefore I prefer frankly to admit at once, what I must say later on, that ethics is

practical philosophy—that is to say, philosophy in action. The philosopher, in seeking to solve ethical questions and problems, has always privately in his mind what may result from their solution; and when he thinks he has discovered what the Good is, he hopes that men are to be found who do what is Good. In short, his only concern is how far his voice may reach and how many may listen to him. Thus it was no mere accident that the first great ethical teacher in the world was at the same time a reformer of morals; as such, lived and taught, suffered and drank the poison-cup. A reformer—but here is the very point. The Good and the Moral are much older than any science of ethics; it would indeed have been sad if the world had had to wait for philosophy to teach it what was Good and what men ought to do. Here, if anywhere, Hegel's ingenious saying applies: 'When Philosophy begins its monochromes, life has already grown old, and although it may be recognised in its sober garb, it does not therein become young again: Minerva's owl begins to stir only on the approach of twilight.' Only he forgot to add that twilight and night are ever followed by a new day, when men can find whether what philosophy has painted in uncertain twilight will stand the light of day. Then is seen whether its neutral delineations have contributed aught towards the attainment of a higher phase of life—towards the completion of the great picture of the future for which every individual ought to work all his life, and for which Humanity as a whole ought to work

for all time—the completion of the true, pure image of Humanity.

Then the second thing that renders my task difficult is that so much of the import of ethics appears to us self-evident and common-place. As I said before, the Good—Morality—was already there; or, to express it quite clearly and simply, there were good men and good moral deeds long before there was any philosophical doctrine of morals. What then can this science of the Good and the Moral have to tell more than what every one knew beforehand? What interest can it offer which has not been familiar to us from childhood and become part of our very nature? Or, more generally, what purpose does ethics serve at all? In my opinion, precisely the purpose which every science serves. It certainly cannot produce anything new, only Nature and Art can do that. It is rather the province of science—of ethical as well as other science—to take cognisance of the actual, to comprehend the existing, to understand the true meaning of the past. But in order to do so, it must first gain an historical knowledge of these things, as botany must gain an historical knowledge of plants, or history of facts; therefore, like these sciences, ethics is in the first place a descriptive science.

Thus it enters into the great circle of the empirical sciences. The ethical philosopher may scan as with the eye of an historian the great phenomena of national life in the State and in law, in religion and the Church, in education and domestic affairs, in morality and cul-

ture. Or he may, as in the method of the naturalist, study the silent growth and development of morality and moral standards, and in doing so seek to discover psychologically in the individual Ego the data and secret sources of what in the objective world we are accustomed to commend as good or to abhor as wicked.

But in doing so he has already passed beyond the limits of mere description, he seeks data and motives, he seeks reasons for what exists and is currently accepted; and thus ethics becomes an analytical science. 'Why,' it asks, 'do men judge and value one action thus and another otherwise? Why is untruthfulness considered immoral and truthfulness moral? Why is it thought wrong to steal, but right to possess property? Why do we call the egotist bad and the benevolent and self-sacrificing man good?'

To see clearly the motive of actions, however, does not always mean to approve of them. When we hear of the custom among certain barbarous races of killing the aged parents and even devouring them, we may comprehend the reasons for this custom, but we do not on that account give it our sanction. A comparison of various peoples and their moral standards, of various States and their laws and institutions, shows that men have diverse opinions as to what is good—practise morality in different ways and forms. It also shows that all States do not stand at the same stage of advancement in morality; on the contrary, it is plain that some are better than others, and the student gives

one the preference over another—he determines the relative place and value of each. Thus ethics as an analytical science naturally also becomes critical. But in order to criticise, to estimate and to classify, a rule, a standard is necessary. It is therefore the weightiest task of our science to find this standard; especially since the same principle serves us as a standard in our appreciation of others and, as we shall afterwards discover, is also the ultimate motive of our own moral action.

Let us suppose that we have found it—let us say, by way of example, that it is the principle of the Common Welfare—then that question of ethics of which I spoke at the beginning of this lecture is at once solved and demonstrated: our science becomes authoritative. In establishing a standard, it assumes a critical relation towards actual life and current opinion. It acts practically, and is justified in doing so; it is in a position to say with authority whether what is currently held to be good is so in reality; it can determine what ought to be, since it regards all actions with a view to their conformity to this standard—according to our supposed example, with a view to their furtherance or hindrance of the common welfare.

Here, however, I must be careful to discourage too extensive claims and too lofty expectations. Whence do we get this standard? Is it not after all only borrowed from actual life and current opinion? and this being so, though it certainly carries us beyond much of individual life and opinion, it is at the most only a very

little way beyond. Or, to express this otherwise, the ethical principle is undoubtedly a reforming power in its relation to conventional morality as a whole, and an authoritative power in its relation to individual action. The standard which it applies, however, is nothing else than the moral ideal derived from the world itself, borrowed and deduced from life—from what is most strong and powerfully active in life. The ideal is always a real power never very far above actual life; it is no remote and foreign principle, never useless and unpractical. Thus the 'ought' is not so very far off from what 'is,'—*i.e.* from what is best in ourselves and others. Precisely in its character as an authoritative science, ethics shows itself to be a true product of the times, which it can surpass only because it has grown out of them, while it owes to them the best of what it has and knows. The critical and reforming element in all ethics lies in this: that it teaches us to understand the actual, while it also points out to us the future goal towards which the present strives; in this also, that it enables us to recognise whatever is reasonable in the actual world, while at the same time it indicates whatever unreasonable it discovers there. It holds up any such unreason as an unreality—a thing which ought not to be—demanding and helping on its reformation or removal. But the true reformers of morality are the great heroes of humanity, the leaders and patterns of morality. In their ranks, along with founders of religions, law-givers, and statesmen, we must certainly place SOCRATES, the first teacher of scientific ethics.

Let us see now at what result we have arrived. My intention has been to show how a doctrine of morals can and must develop from a descriptive into an analytical science; and how, as such, it necessarily becomes critical, reforming, and authoritative. Herein, indeed, lies its connection with preaching. But we need not be over-anxious in this respect, for the distinction between the two, viz. ethics and preaching, may now be clearly seen. The former takes up matters only where the latter leaves them; it accomplishes directly what to the latter is only a distant aim—a product and, so to speak, a secondary or derived product which, sown broadcast in the hope of a practical result, must necessarily be left to develop itself.

One question remains still to be answered, viz. whether what I have said has fully disclosed the scope and purpose of our science? Both yes and no. Yes, for beyond describing and assigning a rational foundation to the existing Good or, where that is impossible, criticising it; beyond indicating the way to reform and pointing out rules and ideals for reform, it would seem that there was nothing more to do. And yet there is something more. After we have clearly comprehended ethical knowledge as empirical, and realised that the Good is something actually existing which has become historical and strives after ideal aims, it yet stands half way between two terms which lie concealed in the obscurity of nescience. It lies between a point of origin which is invisible to us, and leaves us in ignorance as to the 'Whence,' and a terminal point which would



teach us the 'Whither,' but which we cannot as yet discern. Whence comes the Good that is in humanity? Whither tends the onward path of this world, good or bad; of every individual in it as well as of humanity as a whole? Progress or retrogression, optimism or pessimism, heaven or hell? These are questions which no experience can answer. As to the 'Whence,' we have only hypotheses based on psychological analysis; for the 'Whither,' in regard to which our historical knowledge is of as little use, we have only the creations of religious imagination or metaphysical speculation. Thus ethics is built upon a psychological foundation, and ends either in religious faith or in a metaphysic overstepping the limits of experience. And since only the latter is philosophical, philosophical ethics becomes ultimately metaphysico-speculative, even if its sole concern in that character be to destroy the illusion of experimental hypotheses, to make itself independent of these, to reject all that might compromise its independence or dim its purity.

It is now time, however, to leave such preliminary questions and come to the consideration of our special subject. In the first place we must define more closely the nature of 'the questions which ethics must answer, the problems which it must strive to solve. All such questions are included in the simple word 'Good,' as will be seen more clearly when we consider the ambiguity with which we apply this word not only to the entire personality of a man, but to any of his individual actions, and even, in the third place, to material things.

We speak of a 'Supreme Good,' and of many individual good things, including among the latter now the law and the State, now health and fortune, and finally even such common-place things as a savoury dish or a serviceable tool. In order that we may not have to grope blindly for answers to these questions and problems, thus overlooking what is important and bringing into undue prominence matters of but secondary consequence, allow me now to attempt very briefly an Historical Survey. The object of such a survey is to show you the actual development in history of these questions and problems, that you may see how to some extent they have sprung from the wants of the spiritual life of man, and that you may trace their progress and varied fortunes, determined as they must always be by the prevailing course of culture. You must not, however, expect more than what a mere sketch can afford.

The history of our science is divided into three great sections, viz. Greek, Christian, and Modern ethics. Each has its peculiar significance, its special method, its characteristic colour.

With that conspicuous perspicuity and clearness which have made Greece such a successful teacher of humanity in art and science, in language and poetry, Greek Ethic shows us how the scientific examination of morality not only at once assumes that such morality has been long existing and practised in the world, but also recognises that there must indeed be twilight before Minerva's owl can begin to stir. The Greek morality, the Greek Ethos, is civic and political; the Good is

comprehended in the State; questions of moral life are at the same time questions of political life. To be in harmony with the State and its chief concerns, *i.e.* with the law and manners of the times, is the substance of the moral canon, and this harmony is good and at the same time beautiful; a ray of Greek beauty plays about the morality of this singular people; *kalokagathia* (the good-beautiful) becomes the name of its virtue. And this is so thoroughly in accordance with the nature of the people that no strife, no separation, seems necessary, but the Good is of all things the most natural, indeed Nature itself. But with the decadence of the Greek States their morality declines, and hence that harmony too lapses into uncertainty; the faith in the Natural as the Good loses its power. Criticism and doubt begin; a round of speculation stretching beyond the limits of the national horizon degenerates into mere destructive *aufklärung*, which impiously calls in question even the code of national morality and national law.

The self-conscious and self-sufficient generation of Greek illuminati—the SOPHISTS—raised the question whether that which had been hitherto, and was still, currently held to be good in the State was natural law and justice, or only an arbitrary human institution. In deciding for the latter, and in maintaining the right of the individual—of the strong and bold man—to break the fetters imposed on him by the weaker masses, it undermined the morality embodied in the State. Thereupon arose almost spontaneously, as standards

of morality, personal advantage and profit, pleasure, indulgence of the passions, individual mastery and power.

Thus was the beautiful world of the Greek Ethos, of Greek national harmony, outwardly destroyed, and had to be built up anew elsewhere than in the State, viz. in the heart of man, which the Sophists themselves had proclaimed to be the measure of all things. He who attempted to do this was SOCRATES. What the State, becoming more and more corrupt at the very core, could no longer give to its citizens, they must seek (and would find) in their own souls. Socrates sought to teach his countrymen to recognise their own ignorance; what they did not know and yet ought to know was the truth of things, the idea in which also lay the 'wherefore,' the purpose of all. Such a knowledge would be both theoretical and practical; a knowledge of the essence of things would be also a knowledge of their purpose; a true insight the surest guide for right action. Virtue is knowledge; virtue can be taught; no one does wrong knowingly and with free-will.<sup>1</sup> These teachings certainly strained the Socratic ethic.

<sup>1</sup> "That virtue may be taught, meant that by simply interrogating the soul, and making it fetch out its thoughts into the light, you may cause men to see and feel the right; and that, if ever they seem to prefer the wrong, it is from the undeveloped state of their moral insight. Really to *see the good*, and to know it as such, yet not to love and pursue it, is impossible; the vision carries with it its own persuasion and authority; and the vision is so far *one and single*, that either all is seen, or nothing with any clearness; and it is the character of the luminous soul to grow pure and good in all its dimensions at once; and it is only the unreal and imitative virtue of mere habit and happy usage that makes it seem as though

Inquiry into the purpose of things threatened to degenerate into a search for their utility, and the 'Good' seemed likely to be regarded merely as a means to the attainment of the useful. But in thus adding to the Moral an intellectual, and to the Good a utilitarian aspect, lay the sound, wholesome seeds, by means of which the Socratic ethic so far outgrew (in spite of apparent similarity) the weak, worldly, moral code of the Sophists. What was wanting in the doctrine was supplied by the life of that truly divine man, who to the last remained faithful to the Good, and even in prison declared that it is better to suffer than to do wrong and return evil for evil.

And now the question was raised: What is the Good? PLATO, despairing of the world and of the State which had taken his master's life, tried to answer the question by referring the Good to the world of ideas, assigning it there a sublime and undisputed position, as the universal sun from which all things take their rise and into which all return. But very soon this withdrawal from the world, this flight to the realm of imagination, brought its own revenge. Man, who lives in the earthly, material world—according to Plato a world of mere appearance—does well to separate himself from it, to die to it, and to direct his thoughts to that world of 'the Ideas' which was for Plato the

goodness could be broken up into fragments and be turned up piecemeal. This gives the true meaning to the celebrated saying, *that no one is voluntarily bad*, and that all moral aberrations are reducible to mental blindness and mistake."—MARTINEAU, *Types of Ethical Theory*.

world of true being. This negative, ascetic aspect of the Platonic ethic became the model of later religious organisations; but Plato himself, Greek and poet-philosopher, at last found this flight from the sensuous world insupportable. With him the positive ultimately prevailed,—the genuine Greek delight in the Beautiful and Good of this world which shines through all appearance and disguise,—the Eros of philosophical enthusiasm which sees in the earthly life the transcript of ‘the Ideas,’ and rejoices in the participation of this lower world in the splendour of the higher. Thus the wise man enters in the actual world into the service of the Good; and, since the State itself has entered upon this service, the wise man should rule in the State, the philosopher should be King. For State and individual have the same mission, viz. to be in themselves representative of justice, the most comprehensive of the four cardinal virtues, along with wisdom, courage, and temperance. The citizens of this ideal State must be educated in these virtues; hence education is the highest duty of the State and of its leaders. The aim of education is virtue; consequently education, too, is in the service of the Good.

Plato thought to have answered yet another problem by his doctrine of the Idea of the Good, and attempted in his almost mathematical way to answer it for the individual also—the problem, viz., of the Supreme Good. This was, so to speak, the chief problem of Greek ethic, and hence it was not surprising that ARISTOTLE, in whose intellect was re-produced and con-

centrated all the learning of the Greeks, indeed the entire Greek national spirit, should have taken it up and brought it into prominence. Greek ethic is eudæmonistic; in its view some practical result must ultimately arise from moral action, and this result is Eudaimonia, the happiness of man. Only the virtuous are happy. But is virtue the sole element in happiness? or do not external advantages such as physical health, freedom, honour, riches, also contribute to it: does not pleasure also belong to it? Certainly, says Aristotle, these elements are as necessary for virtue as the flute is for the music, and pleasure follows moral activity as a matter of course, indeed necessarily. But virtue, as this moral activity, conformable to the nature of the soul, and therefore reasonable, is the heart and centre of our existence, the most essential element of human happiness. Hence to recognise virtue as the mean between two extremes is the task of clear insight, for which practice, habit, and education are also necessary.

This Aristotelian ethic, through which the national Ethos of the Greeks was reflected and expressed in the intellect of one of their best sons, is the practical conclusion of whatever the Greek ethic had been able to accomplish at the time when it approached its transition into the Hellenistic period. It only remained to the EPICUREANS and STOICS to work out some of its special aspects, and, above all, to individualise the type of the virtuous and the wise man, apart from the State or from State relations, in accordance with the character

of the time. The Epicureans did so in the belief that pleasure was the sole Good, and that understanding was the best means of procuring it and of attaining the desired Elysium. The Stoics, on the other hand, proceeded on the principle of the all-sufficiency of the virtue which proudly wraps itself in the beggar's cloak, and combines a life according to nature, and a reasonable submission to the universal laws of the world, with a negative apathy and entire freedom from desire. It is quite in keeping with all this that we now, for the first time, approach the idea of duty. It is more surprising that in the time of the Roman Emperors the bald cosmopolitanism of this school (the Stoics) should have deepened to the idea of universal love of humanity, and that this idea should have been earnestly and beautifully expressed in various ways. This was above all in keeping with the general religious tendency of ethics and philosophy at the time. The development of this tendency was however reserved for the latest form of Greek philosophy, for the ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL, which proved itself still a genuine outcome of the Greek spirit in this, that, rejecting the Christian pessimism, it joyfully recognised in the Beautiful the earthly manifestation of the Good.

But philosophy could now no longer satisfy the religious spirit of the time; religion took its place; the Galilean conquered the Alexandrian; heathendom became romanticism, and CHRISTIANITY the ruling power of the time. Christianity is religion, but essentially moral religion; hence on its appearance in the world



it at once typifies in itself the problem of the union of morality and religion. They are combined in the admonition with which Jesus' teaching was inaugurated: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" But another—an essential—point is implied in this, viz. consciousness of sin, awakened and sharpened by the voice of conscience, which partly deepens and again partly soothes it by indicating the recourse to grace and the necessity for it. The Good lies in the Kingdom of Heaven—beyond this world. But: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Here the next world is represented as an ideal aim raised from the first so high that the impossibility of attaining it by morality and by individual effort must have been clearly recognised. Here is to be seen also the contrast between Christianity and that Judaism out of which it grew. Alike in their recognition of the law and of duty, and in their energetic appeal to the human will, Christianity rose superior to the Jewish legal righteousness and superficial formality, both in requirement and performance; to the boastful self-glorification of the Jews in their own work, the arrogant assumption of an entirely satisfactory fulfilment of the commandments; to the exclusiveness of the severe Jewish God; to the unlovely narrowness of a merely national religion. This superiority it owed to the idealism which does not ask merely what is proportionate to human nature, or what is within the power of man; and which, on that account, in looking upward to God who 'maketh his sun to rise

on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,' demands from man the most difficult of duties: the love of one's enemies as the fulfilment of the law, the love of one's neighbour as one's-self. Finally, like Socrates, Jesus lived as he taught; he took the cross upon himself, he sacrificed his life to his idea, and thus also to humanity, as all those who follow the path of suffering and death in the service of a great and eternal cause die for humanity.

Later Christianity entered into all these ideas embodied in the life and teaching of Jesus; but what in his sublime and beautiful soul was blended into perfect unity was in the Church constantly more and more separated and put asunder, so that here and there morality was threatened with danger. Especially was this the case with the union of religion and morality, of dogma and love. The religion of Christ becomes the religion of the Christian Church; Christ's belief becomes belief in Christ; and faith itself becomes a theological, an ecclesiastical, a dogmatic doctrine, with requirements and qualifications which often enough come into conflict with the requirements of love. It could scarcely avoid coming into conflict with them, particularly after the Christian Religion had become a State Religion and the Christian Church a State Church. To what an extent Christianity had forgotten love in its attachment to dogma is seen in the persecutions of heretics, to which the persecution of Christians by the heathens appears little more than a harmless prelude. In the same dualistic way as

dogma and love do sin and grace grow further and further apart. Man is sinful by nature; the Good is divine, and only to be found in the next world,—it is something supernatural and superhuman. On the one hand there is an exaggerated conviction of sin, despair of man's own strength, and the harsh and dangerous doctrine of the utter incapacity of man for good. Still more dangerous to morality, on the other hand, is the trust in grace and the Church's power of bestowing grace, and the trust in external observances. Grace, arbitrary in its nature, acts mechanically, magically, miraculously; and forgives and blesses only the few it has elected, strictly adhering to the narrow law: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus!* The moral code itself becomes dualistic. There are worldly Christians, who, as such, must abandon the observance of the highest duties, and so are continually in need of the atoning offices of the Church even beyond this earthly life. And again there are others who work for higher rewards, who take upon themselves vows of poverty, celibacy and submission, and strive by asceticism to effect more than other people, flattering themselves that by strict observance of the evangelical decrees they perform even more than duty requires. Thus arises an exaggerated imitation of Christ in his suffering, an over-valuing of pain, and hence an actual desire and quest for renunciation and martyrdom. But with all this, the nearest and most simple duties are neglected, natural obligations and rights mistaken or ignored, and there is pessimistic contempt of the world,

scorn of the senses, and other unnaturalness. Finally, the highest and best element of Christianity, love itself, is alienated to the service and jurisdiction of the Church. The almsgiving of the Middle Ages is a 'work' done for a reward, that reward being eternal salvation, care for the true welfare of the poor being entirely overlooked; and there is thus manifest the absence of any understanding of the true aims of culture, and of any true sense of its moral importance. Thus the Christian morality of the Middle Ages suffers to a large extent from the inconsistency between the denial of the world and the ecclesiastical recognition of it. This inconsistency is forcibly illustrated in the person of the powerful Innocent III., who, even while writing a book 'On Contempt of the World,' was energetically and greedily engaged in striving to attain the position of a worldly ruler.

Modern times, characterised by humanism, have put an end to this tendency in the Church to rejection of the world, its temporal power having been previously shaken and enfeebled. The REFORMATION took its stand so decidedly on the firm ground of reality, and recognised so clearly the lawful place of the natural arrangements and purposes of society, that Luther, as the founder of a Christianity practically adapted to the world, may also be regarded as the founder of a new morality which, while it sought to preserve the great ideas of Christianity, yet through humanism revealed anew their earthly field of manifestation. It gave back to man, as the stage for his moral activity, the world

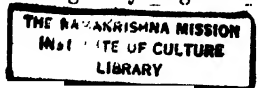
which was unfolding itself before him in all its aspects; and it bade him look to himself and to the State, instead of to the Church, for the sanction of morality. But the old discord was not yet quite overcome by Protestantism and its ethic. Creed, in the form of dogmatic orthodoxy, was still opposed to love, and we see even at the present time, in pietism, that it is often much easier to be a pious enthusiast than to live a practically good life. We find, too, a return to the ideal, prevalent in the Middle Ages, of ascetic conformity to law, or—another sad degeneration of our modern Protestantism—in the spiritlessness of liturgical Church services, and the allurements of a refined sensuousness by means of æsthetic display and musical attractions. It was impossible for morality and its needful development to rest satisfied with the reaction (so healthy in its beginnings) of the Reformation time. Making use of the Protestant tenet of freedom of faith and conscience, but passing beyond it, morality now endeavoured, in disagreement with or simply apart from theology, to re-establish a footing for itself as a philosophical science.

Accordingly, the first task of Modern Ethic is the emancipation of the teaching of morals from theology. With this view attempts are made to regulate and define exactly the relation of morality to religion, perhaps in some such way as that between Church and State, by separation, domination, permeation. Be that as it may, morality becomes eventually recognised as something human and natural; its source lies in the Ego—in the individual. HOBBS sees in it a means of

self-preservation, and this idea he illustrates especially by the case of the State, an artificial creation, which in its absolute omnipotence proclaims justice and morality, and establishes and defines them as mandates of its power. The later English Moralists strive to get beyond this individualistic egoism, which had been continued by the French Materialists of the last century in ever new variations, more critical than profound. They seek, by careful psychological analysis, to get an insight into the nature of morality and to demonstrate its strength and authority. They attain at least to the social conception of it, which is still—or rather is again—at the present time a prevalent topic of discussion. They regard the individual as a member of the race; they clothe him, as Aristotle had done, with social instincts, with kindliness and sympathetic feelings, or even with a special moral sense. Thus they arrive at a utilitarian morality, whose aim it is to obtain the greatest happiness of the greatest number,—the well-being of all, or at least of as many as possible. In quite recent times new suggestions have been introduced into this utilitarianism by DARWIN'S evolution theories, and these suggestions are now being applied in detail in scientific ethics. Evolution, the Greatest Happiness principle, utilitarianism, these are the catch-words of moral philosophy in our century, in Germany as much as in England.

But the direct development of this tendency was interrupted by KANT. The German *aufklärung* philosophy, encouraged by English influence, had worked

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out an optimism and doctrine of happiness in many respects very shallow, which looked upon everything in the world and in humanity as beautiful and good from the very beginning. This optimism certainly indicated perfection as a moral aim, but, wholly engrossed with the charm of virtue, it overlooked the reverse of the picture, or did not attach enough importance to it and to the evils of the world, such as the adversity of the virtuous, that vexed problem of theodicy. Over this weak and spiritless talk of virtue came Kant's categorical imperative like a thunder-clap;—a Moral Law, original, *a priori*, projected into this sensuous world of phenomena. It rejected all human claims to happiness, and held that the one thing needful was the will to do good, and the fulfilment of duty out of respect for the law without, or even against, inclination. And, rejecting empirical motive founded on desire, it tested the principle of every action by its conformity to a universal legislation. Thus Kant brought new strength into an effeminate age, and, as his ethics became 'the philosophical expression of that sense of duty towards the State that pervaded the monarchy of Frederick the Great,' so the Prussian nation showed twenty years later in practical action what the categorical imperative of duty could accomplish. Kant's disciple, FICHTE, however, sublimates this conception of duty in his free Ego, and regards as not truly conscientious every one who acts in obedience to any external authority. He saw in the world only the material for the moral fulfilment of duty, and was, for

that reason, a true preacher for his nation in the period of its severe trial and of struggle towards regeneration. But this advocate of an absolute freedom of conscience is also possessed with the ideas of a national State culture, of State protection (*Der geschlossene Handelsstaat*), and of modern State socialism; above all, he anticipates the modern demand for employment as a political right (*droit au travail*). Hence it is not surprising that his immediate successor, HEGEL, places objective morality in law and State higher than that self-reliant arrogance of the individual conscience. And SCHLEIERMACHER, while fully acknowledging the individual, yet attaches importance above all things to the blending of reason and nature, whose interaction in culture, and in the production of the blessings which arise from culture, constitutes moral progress itself. HERBART'S ethic is significant chiefly in its influence on education; but for that, it would be of little value owing to its cold, aristocratic æstheticism, and its subtle but somewhat feeble ramifications into five practical ideas. SCHOPENHAUER'S pessimism, on the contrary, has caused a very great stir in the intellectual life of our times, without indeed adding to its moral strength or to its efficiency in carrying on the work of culture. And yet this influence of the Frankfurt pessimist is directly connected with the course of our modern culture, with the foremost ethical movement of our day: I mean the social question, which tends more and more to supplant all others, and which consequently has already begun to influence scientific ethic so strongly



that the latest developments are wholly imbued with a social and even socialistic character. And if it should turn out that the ethical is pre-eminently a social question, and that what we call conscience is nothing but the crossing-point of an individualistic and a socialistic tendency of morality itself, then indeed this modern appreciation of social ethic will be thoroughly justified.

But that point must be reserved for future development. After this brief historical survey I proceed to consider ethical problems themselves, and I begin with a description of ethics in its present form and stage of development, and of the extent to which it is recognised as real and authoritative by the individual in his relations to family, society, religion, and the State.

## LECTURE II

### THE ORIGIN OF MORALS

THE eighteenth century was unhistorical and individualistic; the nineteenth is historical and socialistic. This distinction is seen in the different conceptions and aspects of ethics. When we inquire to-day about the origin of morals, we expect that historical research will afford us an answer, and we call to mind the great social communities in which morality has attained an objective form. The individual, on the other hand, comes only in the second place, and chiefly as a member of these communities, in his relation to, and dependence on, them. Morality, in its objective existence, has become for us an historical social product. But we have seen in our last lecture that to perceive a fact historically does not always mean to approve of and sanction it as reasonable. The individual, precisely in virtue of his moral nature, is not exclusively a mere member of society; his relation to society is something more than one of dependence, for to be moral is surely also to be free. Thus at once there arises an antithesis, which we may briefly describe as the antithesis between authority and freedom, between conservatism and pro-

gress. This antithesis is at least related to, if it is not identical with, that between society and the individual, between conventional morality and conscience.

Our task to-day is to endeavour to understand the antithesis between these two principles, and their interaction.

Every human being enters at birth into a family, and, so far as our experience goes, also into a religion, into a state, into a society constituted in a certain determinate way, and maintained according to fixed customs and laws; and this society is, for him at least, an authority. An *authority*—I choose this word because it bears a double meaning which is of importance: an authority may be either one of command or of example. Father and mother, teacher, Church, and State, all approach man with precept. At every stage from youth upwards he is met with 'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not.' More important, however, and stronger, is another influence, more or less unconscious,—the instinct of imitation, which leads the child to follow the example of its parents, of grown-up brothers and sisters or other companions, and even leads the elders themselves to run together like animals in a herd. *Sitte* (custom), the German word itself shows the close connection between custom and morality (*sittlichkeit*);<sup>1</sup> it is necessary, therefore, that we should consider this point more fully.

Custom (*sitte*) we may define as the established conformity of arbitrarily determined actions, developed

<sup>1</sup> So also the Greek, *ethos* and *ethic* (*ἦθος, ἠθικὴ*).

in a certain circle, especially in a racial or national community, in a rank or class of society. This interesting subject has attracted much attention in recent times, especially in its ethnographical, but also in its ethical, aspect. The origin of the rules of custom and propriety has been investigated and found to be twofold. In the first place, their roots may be found in religious conceptions and forms of worship, in which may also be traced the origin even of many trivial practices. Another point, however, is more important, viz. the purposes which custom either has served from the first, or began to serve as soon as it was divested of its religious character by an altered conception of its significance. It is not necessary that such a purpose should have been originally contemplated; if the custom only bears good fruit in its results, it is justified by these results, and is accepted and maintained on that account alone.

An example of this capacity of general usage to serve a purpose is seen in the practice of hospitality. In olden times hospitality had become the prevailing usage, and was expected as a right. Why? The practical interest of the community had given rise to this arrangement as the only possible medium for peaceful commercial intercourse with strangers, foreigners being outside the pale of legal protection. To preserve the sanctity of this custom was the interest of the community, of the State; and thus the exercise of hospitality became popular use and wont—the duty of every individual. To infringe it was an offence—one

of the worst and most hateful—against morality; to exercise it was a virtue. What arose in the first place from practical interest thus received, subsequently, a moral, *i.e.* an obligatory value, and so was placed under the care of the gods. The feeling of humanity, extending beyond the narrow limits of race and city, was strengthened by this custom which, although it did not arise from moral or humane motives, helped to improve the morality and humanity of those by whom it was exercised. In this sense then, even when the trade interest had ceased, or, rather, had taken other shapes, the habitual practice remained sacred, because it had entered into a higher ethical service—into the service of humanity. But when the conditions of life changed, when, with increased communication between countries, the number of inns increased, and that of large private establishments decreased, then hospitality gradually died out; now it is exercised really only in rural districts, and is scarcely recognised as a moral duty at all, is at the most only regarded with æsthetic pleasure as an ornamental arabesque on the ordinary course of life. The feeling of humanity, however, which for long was expressed almost exclusively by hospitality, did not die out with it, but, independently of it, has long since sought other forms of activity and become a cherished possession of the moral man. Let us, in this connection, glance at the relation of conventional morality to law and the state, which may take us on a step further.

Conventional morality demands obedience; how does

it obtain it? how does it enforce its authority? how, in other words, does it become obligatory? Law and the state compel obedience to their commands by punishment and threats of punishment; parents and teachers, too, punish, threaten, and blame, or praise and reward; even religion terrifies with infernal punishment and entices with heavenly reward. In the same way custom is able to maintain its authoritative position, to enforce obedience to its dictates; it, too, has power to compel.<sup>1</sup> The society in which a rule is adopted punishes the transgressor by disregard or derision, or, in worse cases, by outlawry and banishment. Public opinion is here judge and executioner in one; here indeed, is the dangerous and questionable point in the process. The compulsion which conventionalism exercises by means of public opinion as its organ is often of the harshest. Even the feeling of being singular—different from others—is in itself intolerable to many men; and, therefore, they submit to this social compulsion under all circumstances, not only when they recognise the rule as reasonable, but even when it appears to them unreasonable.<sup>2</sup> But in the great majority of cases there is simply no question about this authority one way or other. Because every one acts in a particular way, because we ourselves have done so, have been obliged to do so, from childhood, we continue to do so throughout life, and are not aware, do

<sup>1</sup> 'L'opinion est notre propre conscience, transportée dans le public, et là dégagée de toute complaisance et armée d'une sévérité inflexible.'—*Victor Cousin*.

<sup>2</sup> This is well stated in Mill *On Liberty*.

not even ask ourselves, whether we might not do otherwise. Conventional morality is supported by, or rests upon, the restraining force of habit; and the power of habit is, as Schiller testifies in *Wallenstein*, the strongest power in the world. Unconsciously we get involved in it, unconsciously we remain subject to it all our lives, unconsciously we are biassed by it in the most important decisions. Fear of punishment or of inconvenience, the prospect of reward or of advantage, blind respect for public opinion, love of comfort, and habit, these chiefly are the brazen rivets which bind the individual to the accepted standards of society. 2596.

But is such an adherence to custom moral? In the first place, objectively: is adherence to custom as such—to any custom—moral? Of course not. Hegel is certainly right when he says, 'Public opinion deserves to be both respected and despised, for in it is both the false and the true.' And yet, originally, these questions must be answered in the affirmative. Even as late as in the Greek period the idea of the customary, τὸ νόμιμον, still shows the identification of moral goodness with conformity to established custom. It shows still more: *nomos* means propriety, and also law; the word is much more comprehensive than the German *sitte*; and this combination of meanings was not owing to poverty of language, but to the deep-rooted intuition of the Greek people that the law is—and ought to be—nothing more nor less than the outcome of national manners. Hence, the aggregate of the conventional rules prevalent in the life of the people, and giving to

it a determinate legal form, was at first a perfect unity. Only in the course of time did this undefined generality become divided; one portion of custom was established and confirmed in the State as law, as, indeed, in common law the connection long remained evident, and would, in any case, have been difficult to eradicate from the popular view; the other portion fell exclusively to the care of religion, as in Rome, where divine and human law—*fas* and *jus*—were sharply distinguished. In consequence, there often arose very strange syntheses and nice demarcations of jurisdiction, as, for instance, in the case of perjury and falsehood, when State and Religion agreed in laying stress on some particular phase of morality, because the State was desirous of securing, with the aid of Religion, that phase in the service of its own interest. Only in later times, however, did the conventional lose that connection with the moral which the German word still suggests, while with the Romans, the moral had not even yet been wholly distinguished from manners in general. In this way, however, an important process has been brought to an issue; an Inward or subjective element has separated itself from its more or less Outward or objective counterpart; it has passed beyond the limits of race, nation, or state, and claims to be henceforth regarded as a universally accepted principle.

Thus, besides religion and its commandments, we must recognise law, morality, and manners as three distinct, but yet in many ways overlapping, jurisdictions. The neglect of the latter and of their laws



must be henceforth understood as immoral in a peculiar sense. But, on account of their common origin and of a certain vagueness of distinction between them, the stain, or, at least, the suspicion, of immorality still partly attaches to the transgression, not only of the law (that the murderer or thief acts immorally goes without saying), but even of the more formal requirements of custom. An 'emancipated' woman occupies at once, in the eyes of the male and female guardians of 'propriety,' the position of a wanderer from the path of virtue, or, at least, of one perilously near the edge of a moral precipice. Even at the present time, in the relation of husband and wife there is no distinction drawn between manners and morality; in this respect, to offend against the code of propriety, as it has been formed by the necessity or interest of society, is simply to be immoral; the offensive and indecorous here become the immoral. This shows the permanent significance of the proprieties in relation to morality: the former is the fence surrounding the latter. Manners is the anxiously-guarded bulwark of morality; the feelings of shame, of propriety, of honour, are but the moral results of manners.

But, although we can in this way come to a reasonable conclusion as to the objective side, and although, for the present, while we have to do only with the origin of morals and not with its nature, we can use the word 'morals' in its indefinite, inclusive sense, embracing both law and morality, yet our definition is threatened from another quarter—from the subjective

side of the matter—with all the more danger. Submission to the authority of legal morality—does that in itself render a man, in all circumstances, moral? Can any one maintain such an assertion who has heard of *Antigone*? And, above all, does nothing depend on the motives of such submission?

To begin with the second point: as such motives I have indicated fear of punishment, expectation of reward, and habit. But would we call a man moral who acts morally only from fear or from hope of reward? Certainly not. Why? Because these two motives, at all events in their bare, unmodified form, are never, and are not intended to be, evoked for their own sake, but only as educational expedients. Why does the teacher impose punishment or bestow reward for certain actions? Why does the legislator ordain imprisonment or detention in a house of correction for certain infringements of the law? The former undoubtedly only to promote with greater certainty the ends of education; the latter in order to maintain the authority of the law; both with determinate purposes: the former in order to make his pupil a useful, brave and good man; the latter to uphold fitting conditions of life, recognised as necessary for a particular nation or society. And if religion apparently holds up heaven and hell as ultimate ends, it does so only in its capacity of public instructor, and perhaps even deceives itself as to what it means and what end, or even as to its right to still guide by leading-strings those who are of age, as though they were children to be educated. Thus, whoever conforms to

conventional morality from fear, or from hope of reward, is still in the training-school—is, morally, a child, and, as such, not yet really moral.

It is quite otherwise with the motive of habit. So soon as some particular action has become a second nature, *i.e.* habit, for the pupil, he is educated in that particular. It is precisely the task of education to render it superfluous to frighten by threats of punishment and entice by promise of reward; to accustom the pupil to a certain line of action independently of such artificial supports. Now, if he who subjects and accommodates himself to an established code of manners, the word being understood in its widest acceptance, acts morally in the objective sense; then he who does so quite spontaneously, involuntarily, from habit, is subjectively moral. Conventional morality is, indeed, nothing but a form, now become habitual, of arbitrary action within a definite sphere, which of course we can extend as we like until it includes morality as a generally accepted, thoroughly human principle. Whoever enters this sphere must conduct himself according to its forms, must adopt and practise its habits; and he feels at home in it only after these forms have become to him as a second nature.

Would then habitual submission to the commands of the state, the law, religion, and current standards of morals—would this mean being moral? Yes, if we regard the one factor only, *Authority*; but no—a thousand times no—if we listen to the other, which is *Freedom*—the individual with his judgment, opinion, and will.

I have hitherto purposely refrained from taking up the question whether man adapts himself to custom by reason of innate social instinct; I have, at most, only incidentally referred to the instinct of imitation which man has in common with so many animals. On the other hand, there is no doubt that man is at the outset a selfish animal, and that this egotistical tendency to self-preservation is, if not the only, at least the prevailing bias from birth. Look at the little domestic tyrant, how from the very first day of his life he appropriates all available surroundings almost exclusively to his service, claims everything for the gratification of his wants, and, irrespective of all else, thinks only, or rather is conscious only, of himself. The instinct of self-preservation is in all circumstances the primary human instinct, which makes itself felt the earliest and strongest of all.<sup>1</sup> Under its dominion man seeks, regardless of others, to maintain himself in existence and to make good his position as 'number one.' But in this he meets with resistance; in the first place, with the resistance of external Nature, of which we need not speak here, though it, too—the natural limit of his strength and the consciousness of that limit; the feeling of his weak and finite nature—forms one of the great means of human education. What I refer to emphatically in this connection is rather the resistance with which he

<sup>1</sup> I have purposely adopted this not altogether logical arrangement in the opinion that it is, nevertheless, the best way of expressing my idea.—*Author.*

is met by the world of humanity around him—by society. The parents and brothers and sisters allow the little egotist to tyrannise over them only to a certain extent, for their own healthy egotism leads them to set bounds to the demands of the new-comer. Many things are denied him ; later on much is forbidden, and the transgression of these limits punished. And so it goes on. At school, industry and the performance of set work is a matter of compulsion, and,—what is much more important, almost the most valuable element in our school system,—the little domestic tyrant becomes in it only one among many ; he ceases to be the central point of his little system ; he is inured to submission, to organisation and inclusion in a circle of equals ;—he is disciplined. And here, as indeed before at home in the family, the force of social rule comes into play. To appear singular, to act differently from others, is for the average youth the most difficult and disagreeable thing. What is begun and practised at home and at school remains permanently fixed, and the varied relations of life—in state and society, rank and employment or profession—carry on the work of education in this sense. But this process is by no means simple or direct, for two reasons. In the first place, the Ego—the egotist—remains ; his inclusion in social organisation proceeds only under continued friction, with ever-renewed resistance on his part. His feeling of freedom, his self-consciousness, rebels strongly against these rules for uniformity and discipline, and thus there arise the most violent struggles. We already know two

stages in this educational process and contest—the first and the third: egotism is modified by punishment and reward until at last acquiescence has become habitual. But punishment and reward are external influences; a second, intermediate, stage is a subjective one—that of personal judgment and insight. The egotist sees it to be for his own clear interest to accommodate himself to the general customs, and now he does so consciously, voluntarily, and with pleasure. He himself takes up the position of educator, places himself at the point of view of general opinion. He combats in himself his obstinate desires and inclinations; with the help of reasoning reflection he subdues his self-willed resistance, overcomes his egotism and selfishness—the worthlessness, hurtfulness, and danger of which he must more and more recognise.

By this reasoning reflection he becomes critical, outwardly towards manners, as well as inwardly towards himself. •I will not here consider the case of those who, in regard to external threats of punishment, endeavour, and sometimes contrive, to remain undetected in wrong-doing, and so to escape unpunished, whereby the results of the work of education are endangered; I am going to speak of something different and higher. Suppose the individual considers his inclinations and desires, his efforts and claims, to be really just, though opposed to the rules of custom and society; suppose he sees a custom to be bad, a law to be unjust, certain commands of the state to be tyrannical or foolish:—what is his right course in such

cases? This is one thing—but there is something else : his private circle, family, school, church, state, social position, make varied, to some extent even contradictory, claims upon him. He is met by two claims, apparently having equal authority ; he can satisfy only one ;—which is he to choose ? However he may determine, he is brought into serious conflict both outwardly and inwardly ; he acts wrongly on the one hand because he has held himself obliged to act rightly on the other. Such discrepancies between individual associations and the manifold moral relations of life invariably presuppose, as SCHLEIERMACHER has emphatically and justly said, imperfect conditions. In short, *conventional morality is not in itself necessarily reasonable, and it is not above challenge.*

What position, then, does the individual occupy in this condition of social law ? I do not yet ask : What position ought he to take up ? but only : What position can he, and does he actually, occupy ?

Let us look first at what is unreasonable. Let us be honest. How many are there who see what is unreasonable in our institutions and customs ? How little of the unreasonable is seen even by those who think they are tolerably far-seeing ! The power of habit and custom lies just in this, that it makes us its servants unconsciously, as it were, to ourselves ; throws its net over us before we think about the matter ; lulls into silence our power of criticism, our judgment, our very mind, in the pleasant habits of daily routine. Even the most free among us is in a thousand ways

the slave of habit. And that is indeed quite as it should be. It saves us incalculable trouble and labour, consideration and decision, doubt and hesitancy. This is not only good in the small matters of daily life; but also in many more important affairs we should find it difficult to get on at all without it, without this work of the generations preceding and contemporaneous with us. Yet we notice here and there the grating of the wheels, the deficiencies, the unreasonable and foolish points in our public arrangements, particularly wherever they cause us discomfort. And then—we speak, in the meantime, of quite external relations—we have to consider which discomfort is greater,—to conform to an uncomfortable social canon, or to be looked upon as disregarding conventionality. But suppose a still more difficult case: the custom is agreeable for myself, but I see that it is unreasonable, disagreeable, for others, perhaps even generally hurtful. Let us take an example: the giving of unearned gratuities (tips). I see clearly that I place every one to whom I give anything of that kind in a degraded relation to me; that I debase him, impair his dignity as a man; that the recipient loses and surrenders to me—or, indeed, sells to me—some measure of his independence and equality. How then? Shall I continue to give because custom demands it and I should get the name of a miser if I neglected it? or shall I take up arms against the bad custom, and, by the refusal of this tribute on my part, lead the way with a good example and introduce a better rule?



And now, to pass from small, comparatively unimportant matters to those of high import. Should Socrates have followed the usage of the moral teachers and Sophists, of the statesmen and politicians of his time, and have flattered the people as they did? Should Jesus have kept the Sabbath holy according to the formal, legal spirit of his people and of the Mosaical religion as his neighbours did? Was he wrong in declaring openly that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day, and that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath? Should Luther have recanted, as so many before and after him did, because of the Pope's command? Is he to be blamed for raising the standard of rebellion even against Pope and Council? Was the French nation bound still to submit to oppression and plunder by kings and nobles because that had hitherto been an established custom? Which side shall we take—that of tradition and law, or of those who disobey tradition and formal law? Even at the present day, when nearly four hundred years have passed since that great act of liberation—Luther's Reformation—took place, one section of the German people rejoices in it, while another condemns it as an act of the most insolent and pernicious rebellion. Try to imagine yourselves wholly in the position of the men who lived at that time and took part in the conflicts which preceded the conclusion of the Reformation; think, not only of their anxieties as to their own fate, the discomforts, the dangers, the sufferings which threatened

them, but also, above all, of their feeling of responsibility. They were about to consign to destruction an institution under which a section of humanity had for centuries lived in comfort and satisfaction, and to entail upon thousands war, martyrdom, and death. We know how men usually behave in such urgent internal and external conflicts. The majority are afraid of the risk, they drop at the last moment the hand which had been raised to strike, and submit to whatever custom, order, and law is current. Think of the position of the Catholic bishops of Germany in regard to the public proclamation of the dogma of Infallibility. Brought up in the strict discipline of, and submission to, the Church, in faith in the time-honoured unity of the Church, whose servants and guardians they were—could they, dared they, ought they (they of all people) to endanger or destroy that unity? They did not do so, and we will not be so intolerant as to believe that they all chose their side merely from considerations of personal comfort and shrewd calculation. The code of their Church was stronger than they, stronger than the strength of their personal convictions. For all depends on whether the individual feels himself strong enough, whether he has or has not courage to dare, to sacrifice himself, and to suffer. We will not condemn offhand him who has not such courage; but we will say, Without men who are so courageous, who take up the quarrel with authority and the powers of authority, there would be no progress or freedom in the world.

What applies in great questions applies likewise even

in the smallest matters. In the latter, too, it is to individual boldness in breaking in upon habit and fashion that we owe what progress we make and what liberty we enjoy. Fashion, law, state, religion—their supporters are after all but individuals, and, therefore, it is individuals only who can bring about any reform. In some nations even now the custom of duelling is maintained, a relic of the Middle Ages with their superstitious judgments; and the way in which it is sometimes simultaneously forbidden and demanded, punished and enforced, almost in the same breath, has a directly demoralising influence. The officer who avoids the etiquette is black-balled and loses position and honour. And yet, if only one, then a few, then gradually more, had the courage to take upon themselves, in case of necessity, such social bann, this foolish and pernicious custom might be put an end to now, when no one any longer believes in such senseless supernatural ordeals. At present, whether do we hold one cowardly or brave who refuses to kill another, or run the risk of being killed himself, for the sake of offended honour? do we consider him moral or the reverse? This, at all events, is certain: that such contradictions indicate, under all circumstances, defects in social life, and therefore it is not for us here to justify or to palliate, but frankly to call what is immoral, immoral.

We come now to our second case in point. Not only the individual is often opposed to the social code and in conflict with it, but, as has been said before, even various spheres of morality, various lines of ethical life,

collide in their claims on the individual. He is called upon to satisfy two, and can content only one; he is expected to serve two masters, but can please one only. The aid which custom ought to afford us, and which constitutes its value, viz. to relieve us of thinking and reflecting, of choosing and planning, is lacking in this case. Instead of following, we must choose; instead of feeling in accord with others, we must in any case create a rupture which involves us in the hardest inward and external conflict. SOPHOCLES has provided an ever-typical example of this in his *Antigone*, who has to choose between the written law of the state and the unwritten law of family love and honour: such a position is powerfully expressed in the saying, often indeed shamefully misused, that it is better to obey God than man.

In such a case, what decision is generally come to? Most frequently the choice is unhesitatingly given to the alternative preferred by inclination and nature, habit and culture. *Antigone*, whose heart bids her join with those who love rather than with those who hate, can for that reason obey only the unwritten law of love, not the royal command of hate. But, in doing so, is she blameless, has she kept within the bounds of morality? In any case, she has trespassed against one law—against one sphere of duty; and the more sensitive a man or woman is, the more heavily will such a trespass weigh upon his soul, even when he tells himself a thousand times that he could not and ought not to have acted otherwise. The outward

conflict becomes for him an inward discord, and he will at any rate suffer, even although the result should not turn out so hard for him as it did in the case of *Antigone*.<sup>1</sup>

In view of such collision of duties, the question: What *ought* man to do? urges itself strongly upon us in place of the other: What is he *likely* to do? And thus we have arrived at that fundamental question of ethics, which we have recognised from the first as the most significant and important: the question of the moral standard. I have, in this lecture, frequently and advisedly postponed the quest for that standard; but the necessity for such a standard has become more and more apparent, and the uncertainty about it sometimes threatened to render impossible any answer to the question concerning the origin of morals, or even to reduce *ad absurdum* any attempt to give an answer. Does acquiescence in accepted standards really consti-

<sup>1</sup> The rule of conduct in the presence of conflicting motives is thus laid down by DR. MARTINEAU:—

‘Every action is Right, which, in presence of a lower principle, follows a higher: every action is Wrong, which, in presence of a higher principle, follows a lower. . . . No constant aim, no one royal faculty, no contemplated preponderance of happy effects, can really be found in all good action. More scope for variety is felt to be needed: and this is gained as soon as we quit the casuists’ attempt to draw an *absolute dividing line* between good and bad, and recognise the relative and preferential conditions of every moral problem. . . . In the solution of all ethical problems, we have successive recourse to two distinct rules, viz. the *Canon of Principles*, which gives the true *Moral criterion* for determining the *right* of the case; and then, the *Canon of Consequences*, which gives the *Rational criterion* for determining its *wisdom*. The former suffices for the estimate of *Character*; but, for the estimate of *Conduct*, must be supplemented by the latter.’  
—*Types of Ethical Theory*.

tute morality? It seemed at first as if we should have to assume that to be so, because the actual condition of morality seemed to justify such an assumption; but subsequently we had to acknowledge that morality is not always quite coincident with social codes; that authority is not invariably in the right; that, on the contrary, men often regard disobedience to custom on the part of themselves or others as of higher value, as more moral, than submission to its commands; that freedom maintains its rights beside, and even against, authority. To follow current standards is moral, but, in some circumstances, to disobey them is higher morality; to be conservative is good, but to be progressive is, in some circumstances, still better. In some circumstances—thus the problem gathers itself together; and the inquiry which we have now to make is none other than that into the essential nature and true standard of morality—the question: What is really and truly moral? what is good? We shall now have to deal with that question in the first place.

*Note.*—The story of Antigone, which is cited above as an illustration of the subject of conflicting duties, occupies a prominent place in the Greek drama. See *ÆSCHYLOS' Seven against Thebes*, and *SOPHOCLES' Antigone* (DEAN PLUMPTRE'S translation). Antigone, in a noble spirit of self-renunciation, resolves to obey the law of the gods, even at the sacrifice of her own life, by performing the wonted burial rites for her brother Polyneikes in defiance of the edict of the Theban Senate forbidding these honours to the dead, and by her devotion earns from the poet 'the meed of golden praise.'—Tr.

## LECTURE III

### THE NATURE OF MORALS

IN considering the origin of morals in our preceding lecture, I described morality as a social product, and I spoke of the contrast between society and the individual, between authority and freedom, between conventional morality and conscience. With that I can directly connect what I have now to say in pursuing the inquiry as to the nature of morals. What is good? When do we call an action good? What determines us to pass such a judgment—to form such an estimate? These are necessarily the fundamental questions of ethics.

We possess a twofold criterion for such a judgment and estimate of human actions; they have results and they have reasons, or—as they are acts of the will—motives. With what then is the moral judgment of an action concerned—with motives or with results? We are inclined to think first of the motives; for we know that actions may have the best results, and yet may have arisen either from quite casual and indifferent, or even from bad motives. Look at this service rendered out of mere politeness, and yet received as a true and great act of generosity; and there, again, at the

hypocrite who really effects something good and great, but only for the sake of appearance. In such a case we do not call the action morally good, in spite of its beneficial influence and its fortunate results.

Then it is the motives that are important? But in the way of this conclusion there is a serious and two-fold difficulty: we judge so often, and we so seldom know the motives, the real, true motives; for who can read the heart of another?<sup>1</sup> Often enough we would find it difficult to specify the radical motives of our own actions; to do so with certainty in the case of others is quite impossible. And then, do we really call an action good which, though performed with the best intention, has yet done harm, and nothing but harm, in the world? Brutus' share in the insensate murder of Cæsar, the murder of Kotzebue by Sand,—these were deeds arising certainly from pure, noble, ideal motives; but were they, on that account, good actions? They were not so, for this reason above all: that their further consequences and influence were so disastrous. In one case a great and irreplaceable life was sacrificed, and, in consequence, renewed bloodshed, convulsion, proscription, and civil war followed: in the other case, a mere worthless life was as needlessly and fanatically destroyed, and the consequences of the deed were the suppression of all movement in the direction of freedom; the destruction for many years to come of all hopes

<sup>1</sup> 'The inward work and worth  
Of any mind what other mind may judge  
Save God, who only knows the thing He made . . .'

*Robert Browning.*



and efforts for the unity of the German nation ; and the arbitrary restraint and persecution of the most worthy citizens, both old and young.

We were mistaken then, and it is to the results of actions we must look? We are to consider as good what has a good result, *i.e.* what is useful? Originally, this question was certainly answered in the affirmative. Even Socrates scarcely got beyond the idea that the Good is the Useful, and the Useful the Good; indeed, our language seems to sanction this identification even to the present day, since we apply the adjective 'good' not only to the act of a brave man, but to the serviceable pen with which I write a letter, or to the material for wearing apparel which is commended to me as durable and of a fast colour.

An action then is good when it is useful? But to whom must it be useful?—to me, to the agent himself? Perhaps so. For instance, is it not good for me to employ my leisure hours in the advancement of my own culture, my æsthetic or intellectual improvement? Yes; but it is only necessary to cite another example in order to reject that answer: would it really be good if I were to tell a lie for the sake of some such advantage?—if, to further my own career, I were to slanderously disparage in the public opinion my political comrade or opponent? It might certainly be urged against this view that such conduct could not really be useful to me in the end, but would even bring upon me great injury, and that in this way selfishness might be defeated with its own weapons and, so to speak, the engineer be

hoist with his own petard. I do not regard such a consideration as worthless, but, at any rate, it does not help us much here.

Let us try then another view of the matter. We call that useful which brings us gain and advantage, which promotes our happiness and increases our prosperity. Happiness, prosperity—we measure them by our feeling of satisfaction and comfort, by a sensation of pleasure or the reverse. But in this way the Good, if it is to coincide with the Useful, comes dangerously near the Agreeable. Perchance then the Agreeable is the Good? Yet this question has long been decided in the negative. Why in the negative? Because, as every one knows, or may readily perceive, the Agreeable may also be hurtful. The Agreeable, as the feeling of pleasure, is a phenomenon only of the present moment; whilst we—we live beyond the present, in the past and in the future. We have to pay for present pleasure by pain and misery next day; the intoxication of enjoyment is followed by remorse which makes the recollection a torment to us, and by enervation which mars and endangers our future. It requires only a little reflection to lead us to discard hedonism, *i.e.* the doctrine that the Agreeable is the Good: it is contrary to personal experience and to the common judgment of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

The happiness, the welfare of man is no momentary phenomenon. In it is involved something altogether

<sup>1</sup> 'Clearly empirical utilitarianism which makes happiness the immediate aim stands in contrast with the rational utilitarianism which aims at fulfilment of the conditions of happiness.'—*Herbert Spencer*.

greater and more durable. It embraces our whole existence, our entire life, with all the ties that unite us with the past by means of memory; and by hopes, wishes, strivings, aims, and plans, connect us with a distant future—that fashion our own future, as it were, by means of the present and its relation to the future. But, even with this view, we would not get beyond the individual;—‘good’ would still mean only what is useful to *me* and brings *me* happiness, what promotes *my* welfare and enhances the value of *my* existence: this view would afford us a whole certainly, but still only the individual. Those ties, however, carry me beyond the narrow circumscribed sphere of my individual existence. Just as, when I consider my existence as a whole, my view is extended beyond the present, so am I still further urged beyond my individual existence by the consideration of my external surroundings. A bond of sympathy unites me even with lifeless Nature when I feel æsthetically in accord with her and make her the symbol of my moods, the mirror of my inward life. How very different, how much fuller and more intense, is my connection with the human world around me! Here there is not only æsthetic symbolism, but actual sympathy in life, feeling, experience; real close blending and union with this great world of humanity. Could I be happy if all around me were suffering? Is it likely that what is injurious to all others could afford me any solid advantage? Am I happy if my family is the reverse; if the society in which I live is in a

disordered or ruinous condition ; or if my native state or country, the race of which I am a member, is visited by heavy misfortune or hastening to its fall ? I am bound in such innumerable ways to society (the word being understood in its widest sense) that what is hurtful to it cannot in any way be beneficial to me, that when it suffers, I too share in its misfortune.

Let us regard the matter in a still more objective way. Who is it that estimates and judges my actions ? Not indeed I, the individual ; but society. What passes as good in society is established as the Good ;—we are already familiar with this authoritative attitude of public opinion. What then would it declare to be good, if not what is useful to it, to the collective whole of society, at first in a comparatively narrow sphere, but which gradually widens until at last it embraces humanity as a whole ? So whatever is advantageous to such narrower or wider circles, whatever occurs and is done in their service and interest, whatever contributes to the general welfare and happiness—that is good, and is recognised by society as good. Here then is the objective principle which determines the substance of the Good, the standard by which we may judge whether an action—in itself and quite on its own merits—is good or not. It is the *Greatest Happiness* principle, the idea of the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number.

A utilitarian principle and morale,—it comes to that ! I do not reject the name, although it is in some ways objectionable. In the word ‘ advantage ’ there is some-

thing outward and of the market, something trivial, without energy, and without spirituality: yet these latter qualities are needful for moral action; therefore, I prefer not to use the name utilitarian. In the same way I might accept the designation of universal eudæmonism, for no doubt the question is ultimately one of happiness and prosperity. But 'happiness' contains the subsidiary meaning of a casual element independent of human concurrence, while the moral stands in contrast to the mere casual, and depends very decidedly on the personal agency of man; therefore, with both the ancient and modern representatives of this point of view, I prefer the name 'welfare,' and say with them: The principle of the COMMON WELFARE affords the desired standard for the estimate of moral action.

But here difficulties might be raised which I must clear away before I go on to admit that in this principle we have only now found the half of what we want. If that is good which promotes the welfare of all, or at least of as many as possible, then does not morality depend on something external, more or less independent of man; on the opportunities he enjoys, and on the position he occupies? Can the man who fills a high office not serve a wider circle, and so act more morally than the labourer who passes his life in modest obscurity? He may do more good—Yes. But does he act more morally?—No. Mere opportunities, external circumstances of position, are morally indifferent; what is important is the use a man makes of his oppor-

tunities: 'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.' In this view our principle is so far from being aristocratic, that it may be said rather to support the saying (originally indeed used with a different significance): 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!' The welfare of the greatest *possible* number—hence a man's work is valued *in proportion* to the welfare he promotes in that sphere and measure in which he has opportunity and power. In this consists the greatness and beauty of moral judgment, that it takes into account the individual momentum of ability, opportunity, and power; and in this, that being absolutely democratic, it values the smallest equally with the greatest. UHLAND says: 'The heroism of the lowly is beautiful as that of the great.' If the very poorest labourer works honestly for his daily bread, keeps his home pure and honourable for his wife and children, lives in thrift and peace, and brings up his children to be good men and women;—does he not do all that lies *in his power* to contribute to the welfare of all; to the welfare of his family; to the welfare of his social class, to whose honour and adornment he contributes; to the welfare of his fatherland, of which he is himself a worthy citizen, educating his children to be worthy citizens? Modest and unnoticed work even in the most limited circle is valued by the principle of the common welfare equally with the most brilliant and public services. And yet greatness and splendour do not altogether

count for nothing: between great, brilliant, moral deeds on the one hand, and obscure, modest, moral influence on the other, there lies a distinction which no principle can remove from the world. No good action is ever lost; it ever produces new good: only the brilliant, however, only the great and the best, are never forgotten. Such is the actual state of matters in the world; that is the aristocratic feature in the history of the world, in contrast to the democratic, equalising, and impartial principle of morality.

We abide by what we said: whatever is done in the service of humanity, of society, of the welfare of others, is good. But—here is another difficulty—do we not, in this admission, touch upon the notorious jesuitical principle that the end justifies the means? Certainly; and not only curious philosophers, but even one of the most distinguished Protestant theologians not long ago attempted a vindication of this principle. It is indisputable that every means becomes moral only in the service of a moral end; but this plain and just idea becomes immoral if it is wrongly understood or wrongly used. It is misunderstood and misused in a flagrant way, dangerous to the whole public, in the Society of Jesus and its code of morality. This code substitutes for a highly moral end an immoral external one—*majorem ecclesiae gloriam*—which it seeks to set up above the inward subjective conviction of the individual, and the objective power of the moral sense of the community. Thus the error is not that the end governs the means; but that a false end is set up as the highest;

that the Church, which is but a means, is enthroned, and the well-being of individuals and of whole nations sacrificed to it as to a Moloch. That is what is blameworthy in the morality of the Jesuits. It is in accordance with this that in any given case the Jesuits, like all fanatics—and the cold, calculating fanatic is the most terrible and dangerous—regard even the most immoral means as morally justifiable for the attainment of their end. We cannot then, notwithstanding our acknowledgment of that principle in the abstract, in any way excuse or vindicate the jesuitical application of it: the Jesuits are no better than their reputation.

Actions then which are conducive, directly or indirectly, to the general welfare are in fact good, objectively considered. But is this objective consideration the only, the sufficient, consideration? Every action has an influence, a result; we have hitherto spoken of that: but it has also motives; of these we have now to speak.

Motives are always feelings, for only a feeling sets the will in motion; indeed we may, with this opportunity, go further and say: feelings are the basis of our whole supersensual life. Only that which approaches us in the form of a feeling excites our interest, forces an entrance to our consciousness, is recognised by us; and it is only after the feeling has been blunted and worn down by repetition and familiarity that the sensuous experience becomes theoretical knowledge and that which was 'felt' becomes 'known.' This somewhat irrelevant statement is yet not altogether



superfluous here, because the subjective origin of morals which we have to investigate is but a special application or illustration of this general psychological law.

The will is moved by feelings. Urged by the feeling of displeasure, it does what will remove the displeasure or produce its opposite. All our voluntary actions then are directed in the first place to the attainment of our personal pleasure, and in so far we may say: man is a born egotist. But, as we have seen, society opposes this egotism and teaches man to enter into its service and take part in promoting its welfare, even by the suppression and sacrifice of his personal comfort and enjoyment. To bring him to this, society must apply artificially the same levers which naturally move the egotist to action—pleasure and pain, or, as applied by society, reward and punishment. But so long as man serves society from hope of reward or from fear of punishment, his moral education is incomplete, he is not yet moral; as yet, whenever that hope or fear ceases to move him, he relapses more or less rapidly into the old egotism; his morality is but an enforced and therefore an unstable morality. But the characteristic notes of morality are free will and constancy. Free will—for we call good in the subjective sense the will and the intention, not the outward act; constancy,—for it is character that concerns us, not isolated action. Why so? Here again we can take our stand on the ground of society, for here again its interest comes into play. Only when a man acts morally of his own

free will is society sure of him: only when he is constant in well-doing can society rely upon him in all circumstances, both now and for the future. Society demands this subjective condition in addition to the objective element of the Good: it regards as good only him who both *is* subjectively good, and whose *action* is objectively good.

But from this very attitude of society in making these demands and judging according to them, there arise difficulties to which I have already referred. By what mark or characteristic does society expect to recognise the man who acts rightly of his own free will and is constant in so doing? The heart of man, with the motives of his conduct, is for ever sealed from it. The truth of this statement must at once be admitted when we consider how often society errs in its moral judgments: a hypocrite may long pass for an upright man ere he is unmasked; indeed, many a hypocrite remains all his life unexposed. On the other hand there are not altogether wanting signs and criterions by which society may draw conclusions from what is outward to what is inward, to motives and will; from individual actions to the essential character. Even in cases where my own interests and welfare are contrary to, and at ~~issue~~ issue with, those of the community as a whole, my action is good only when I subordinate my interests, when I risk my welfare, when I place the general higher than the individual. To act unselfishly, to make sacrifices, in fine, to subordinate oneself to the common good,—such conduct we call moral; *vice versa*,

selfishness and egotism are characteristic of immorality. Thus Kant believed himself bound to indicate the following as absolutely the *one truly moral* position: 'to do one's duty *without* and even *against* inclination, for inclination always involves contamination of the Good by selfish motives.' This is a just description of militant morality. But morality triumphant in the battle against the personal nature with its inclinations and desires is not the only form of morality. Such a morality, indeed, affords the clearest evidence, the best guarantee and test of its own genuineness, and therefore this struggling and conquering morality gives the judge assurance of the justness of his verdict; but yet we must remember, 'God loves a cheerful giver.' Hence we have this other position: to devote oneself to the common good and to the welfare of others,—to do this freely, resolutely, not with preliminary struggle and victorious conflict over oneself, but with joyful, unquestioning, heartfelt good-will;—this is not only moral in itself, but likewise a sign and a guarantee of actual, assured morality. Here, too, the saying applies: 'Be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance,' and Schiller humorously satirises Kant's dictum in his hexameter:—

'Willingly serve I my friends; but, alas! I do it with pleasure,  
And so 'tis vexing to think, that I am not one of the good.'

*Xenien.*

Beside the struggling soul stands the lofty, beautiful soul; beside the moral worth of duty, the genius of moral sweetness accompanies us as another guide through life.

Let us now finally leave the standpoint of society and consider the question which has long been pressing for an answer: How does man come to be moral in this subjective sense? What can induce him voluntarily to renounce his own good in order to promote that of others, to neglect or even injure his own interests for the sake of the general welfare? in short, how can such an egotist as man make up his mind to be altruistic, to act unselfishly? So long as society influences him through rewards and punishments, so long as he is restrained by respect for public opinion and regard for status and reputation, so long as religion—with respect to the future—entices him with the prospect of heaven or terrifies him with the horrors of hell, so long is such conduct intelligible. And for this reason we can understand, too, that many men never get beyond this stage of education, that their morality always remains an enforced and unstable morality.

A second point we must remember, too,—which has been, if not altogether overlooked in ethics, at least in many ways far too much forgotten in the condemnation of Kant's one-sidedness—that the two motives, the egotistic and the altruistic, as they are generally awkwardly enough called, are much more frequently in accord than we like to own, because moral preaching naturally emphasises and insists upon the contrary. Not only, on the one hand, does it concern the interests of the general welfare that every individual should take care of himself outwardly and inwardly; maintain his health; cultivate his faculties and powers; sustain

his position, honour, and worth; and so, his own welfare being secured, diffuse around him too happiness and comfort: but also, on the other hand, it concerns the personal, well-understood interests of the individual himself that he should promote the aims of others, contribute to their happiness, serve their interests, and even make sacrifices for them. Just as one foregoes a momentary pleasure in order to gain a lasting and greater enjoyment, so the individual willingly sacrifices his personal welfare and comfort for the sake of society in order to share in the welfare of this society; he buries his individual well-being in order that he may see it rise in richer and fuller abundance in the welfare and happiness of the whole community.

But is this moral? Such a calculation is yet but a refined and sublimated, not to say a subtle, egotism. But is it natural to man to reckon and balance in such a petty, hair-splitting way? When I provide for the happiness of my family, I am certainly aware that a discontented wife may embitter a man's life, and that ill brought-up children are a source of sad grief and heavy misfortune; and thus I know that my care for wife and children, in spite of all sacrifice which it may cause me, will in the long run be richly repaid. This consideration, to speak frankly (but, unfortunately, we are in the habit of so pleasantly deceiving ourselves in moral matters,—and this self-deception may be traced deep in ethical systems,—it is as if the ethical critic feared to take things as they are, perhaps in the not unreasonable apprehension that if he were to proclaim

an open secret, the fault would be laid to his charge, and he would be held responsible for what is yet common to humanity)—this consideration, as a matter of fact, fades away and then creeps in again, it flashes through the mind just to disappear as quickly as it came; as indeed the human mind is not so meagrely constituted as to admit of only one motive for an action, and for each action only its one special, individual motive. But such an instantaneous coming and going of thoughts and motives can by no means be characterised as calculation and reckoning, counting and balancing. Even if such a consideration does flash through my soul, I do what is right in home and family, in profession and calling, in the community and in society, not *by* calculation, and after I have satisfied myself that the balance will fall in my favour. Scarcely one in a thousand acts so,—how then do the nine hundred and ninety-nine act? If they do what is good and right, why do they do it? It seems to me we must frankly say that most of us as a rule do—that it is characteristic of humanity to do—what is good unconsciously and instinctively.

This is our third point,—this unconscious moral action. We have seen already that the aim of education is none other than this: to bring man to act morally from habit, to induce him to place himself unquestioningly and instinctively in the service of the common welfare.

But, before considering further this point, so extremely important in connection with both the origin

and the nature of morals, we must notice another and last point. Is egotism really the only motive natural to man? Does man really stand in a hostile relation to man, as *homo homini lupus*, as a brute or even as a devil? This assertion has been maintained, and it would be difficult directly to disprove it, for in this case experience is self-contradictory. Yet one fact pleads unanswerably that there is something in the natural man beside and beyond egotism, that we must recognise a natural counter-balance to it,—I mean the relation of mother to child. Here egotism in its domineering exclusiveness is overcome physically, as it were; here man is elevated by nature itself above himself by the call to care for and tend another being; thus motherly love is the point of origin and the fundamental form of all love, the manifestation and source of the highest morality. Take, too, the sexual instinct, which indeed contains a strong admixture of egotism, whence it was so long before the institution of marriage became morally established and included in the social code; take the fact that, on the whole, there is nothing more terrible for man than solitude, that there is actually something in him—quite apart from personal necessities—which naturally leads him to seek the companionship of his fellows; and it seems to me that we have no reason to deny to our nature social instincts or sympathetic feelings. If I am right in my assumption, we find in human nature itself—not indeed a natural morality, for there is no such thing, but—an innate support and help, around which morality may grow up,

a natural and reliable ally to which morality may appeal in its antagonism and conflict with the equally natural egotism. Hence some teachers have directly declared sympathy or benevolence to be not only the natural foundation, but the very core and essence of morality itself.

I have hitherto spoken only of something natural, habitual, unconscious; but morality is not innate; it is free, voluntary, and therefore conscious. Free—here we come to the old question of the freedom of the human will, to the conflict between indeterminism which asserts free will, and determinism which denies it. The contention on this subject is so vexed because it is so difficult to avoid misunderstanding,—because, as a rule, the same word has to serve for such a variety of meanings. Of course I can only touch upon this question here. It is certain that we have consciousness of freedom, *i.e.* consciousness that in any given case I might act otherwise than as I do act—might have acted, otherwise than as I have acted. On this depends the possibility of repentance, and of the feeling of responsibility which I bear within me, by reason of which I criticise my actions and call myself to account for them. Indeterminism concludes from this that there is action without, or even contrary to, motive,—thus, action without a cause; and that the ultimate source of decision lies sovereign and independent, beyond all motives, in the *x* of the free will. A most premature conclusion! In the first place, the fact is overlooked that the consciousness of freedom



itself is but a diminishing quantity, strongest in the boy and youth, in the savage and uncultivated; weakest in the full-grown, mature man who has a knowledge of himself and of life, and has learned to regard himself and life *sub specie æternitatis*. Then again that feeling of responsibility tells me only that all my actions proceed from myself, that they are mine; as to what determines those actions, it says nothing. We know in many cases why we have acted as we have and not otherwise; we talk of reasons—stringent reasons—for our action. But frequently these reasons are not clear to us, chiefly because they affect the will only in the form of feelings, and these avoid in so many ways the clear light of consciousness, both before the action and still more after it; and so we are often unable to account to ourselves for having acted in a particular way and not otherwise, and think that we might just as well have acted otherwise. We acted, however, as we could not avoid acting at the time,—on the ground of the strongest motive which was for us stringent and decisive.

The chief motive in all our action is entirely withdrawn from our view, for it is, in fact, an unconscious motive, it is—habit. We act in most cases as we have been in the habit of acting from youth upwards; and the sum of all our routine and practice, of all our acquired aptitudes and accomplishments, of all current notions and maxims, is incorporated in our character,—we act in accordance with this character—*operari sequitur ex esse*. But character is only the product of

what we are by nature, and of what education, circumstances, society,—in short, life, have made us. Hence the peculiar interaction through which character is formed by action, and action again is determined by, and conforms to, character—a paradox which is yet in truth no paradox. Every action lays the foundation of a habit, leaves behind it a certain inclination; such an action when repeated is easier than at first, and with every repetition it becomes more unquestionably a matter of course. Thus every new action deepens the grooves of habit, and, *vice versa*, these channels of habit determine, with ever-increasing probability, action in every individual case, so that it may be directly foreseen and calculated on. In this sense education is formation of character: its aim is to render moral action habitual, to impress on the pupil a moral character, because society can count upon a man,—and every individual can be sure of himself—only in so far as he bears, and may be relied on as bearing, such a character. \* This is why feeble, and therefore unreliable, members are useless and worthless in human society; while, on the other hand, the man of a strong and firm character is so valuable, and occupies such a high moral status, because society estimates every one according to the manner in which he serves, and may be relied upon as sure to serve, it.

All this however is possible only on deterministic grounds; that doctrine alone ensures the results of education, and warrants calculation and reliance in intercourse with our fellow-men. For man acts in

conformity with his character, and it is only in exceptional cases, when something new appeals with overpowering force to his feelings, that he can break through the power of habit,—that he can act in opposition to his character. Upon this rests the possibility of altering the character, but certainly also the difficulty of such a radical conversion. No one can wholly change his nature; even Paul after his new birth retained some trace of the old Saul; in the Christian we still recognise the Jew; in the Apostle the Rabbi and pharisaical zealot. For character is a second nature; and no one can act contrary to his nature, no one can cast aside and disown his nature.

Finally, it is in character that all the maxims and principles lie which are so important for moral life and action; and here we see the just value of the influence of thought and reason on morality. As a thinking being, when I intend to act and have to make a decision, I can foresee and calculate the results of the action, and can accordingly recognise and adopt the suitable means; and I am equally able to perceive and clearly understand the consequences of my completed action. With those considerations in view of an aim for the future, and with these reflections on the consequences of the past, are connected the feelings of approbation and disapprobation, of pleasure and dissatisfaction, which influence and determine the will. My conceptions and thoughts thus themselves become motives; my own action being quite clear and comprehensible to me, I can make a stand in aid of those

impulses of my own nature and of society which combat and repress egotism; I can, by means of conscious reflection, strengthen the motives arising from these impulses, and consequently also myself decide what is for the interest of the common welfare. The function of thought is critical in moral matters also; to recognise the *true* welfare of man, and to distinguish it from what is only seeming and plausible. But if I consciously do what is objectively in accordance with the principle of the common welfare, then I am subjectively a morally good agent. In establishing this principle, in whatever form, in my consciousness,—in taking it for the guiding motive of my action, for the principle of my will,—it becomes for me a rule, a precept, an ideal. Consecrated by education, religion, state, society; consecrated by practice and habit; and consecrated, indeed purified, by my own critical insight and by my own conscious assent,—this ideal is the aim of my efforts, the guide and leading star of my life, at once the origin and the goal of my action—a high thought of which I am at once conscious and convinced, which I both recognise and acknowledge, an ever-present Monitor in the Hegelian double meaning of the word. By varied practice it becomes fixed in my memory, incorporated in my very nature; thus becoming an inward principle which henceforth despises and casts off all external supports, all expedients of education, the heaven and hell of religion, the punishments and rewards of the state, and the dread of public opinion;

and bids me do the Good spontaneously, as a matter of course, as a necessity of nature. The moral character is that in which consciousness, will, and habit are combined in harmonious union, and in which the Good is done with free-will, precisely because it has become an unalterable necessity. It is done for its own sake.

At this stage of moral development, respect for the moral law, as for a sacred ideal of action, is in our view the highest and best. As to this we differ from Kant in two respects. Firstly, this ideal and standard of morality is not a law issuing from another world and operating with absolute certainty. The ideal itself is rather of simply human origin, and is therefore qualified by history; it has been acquired and developed by society. Accordingly, its import too is a growing and changing one. Action in the service of the common welfare is no magic wand at whose touch the locked doors spring open by themselves in every individual case,—which solves the most obscure problems as though they were but child's play. What in any given case is required of us in the service of the common welfare does not remain objectively the same at all times and in all cases; while subjectively, earnest consideration, difficult and painful selection, are many a time needful before the right course can be found. Even in morals there are errors and mistakes. Harmony between the objective and the subjective factors is indeed the ultimate aim; but as a matter of fact man too often falls short of this ideal of perfect morality; too often the harmony is wanting.

I may act subjectively according to the best of my knowledge, and yet objectively may be acting falsely, erroneously, immorally. To act unconscientiously, *i.e.* contrary to one's own moral persuasion, is in all circumstances bad; for to do so is treachery to the ideal of morality. But to act conscientiously may not in all circumstances be the right and good course. Hence this appeal to conscience is not without danger; for, on this subjective side of morals, there is the possible risk of caprice assuming the throne and misgoverning in the name of conscience.

It is therefore desirable frequently to re-measure one's actions by the approved standard, to test one's-self anew and to purify and raise one's ideal;<sup>1</sup> ethics must not be based only on the unstable ground of subjectivity, but must be secured by the strong anchor of an objective principle. This is all the more necessary since we are not in every case conscious of the principle,—the ideal is not invariably present to our souls. As I do not require a separate act of the will in order to raise my foot for every step in walking, but mechanically continue to walk in the way I set out, just as little is a fresh recollection of principle and ideal, a renewed reference to rule and law, requisite for every individual action. Principle and rule are incorporated in my character as maxims for action;

<sup>1</sup> 'Rien n'est plus salutaire que d'exciter et d'entretenir dans les âmes ces nobles sentiments qui nous enlèvent à l'esclavage de l'intérêt personnel. L'habitude de partager les sentiments des hommes vertueux dispose à agir comme eux. Cultiver en soi la bienveillance et la sympathie, c'est féconder la source de la charité et de l'amour; c'est nourrir, c'est développer le germe de la générosité et du dévouement.'—VICTOR COUSIN.

action in accordance with them has become habitual, a second nature. I *act* rightly because I *am* good,—this is the meaning of the well-known demand that the Good should be done for its own sake. I cannot now do otherwise than do the Good, it is no longer needful for me to consider; a moral harmony, an inward voice, a direct feeling, a kind of *daimonion* (or Socratic genius) tells me directly what I ought to do, or, to speak more correctly, restrains me from doing what I ought not to do. Only when the opposition between duty and desire, between egotistical inclination and social subordination, between freedom and authority, makes itself very sensibly felt, do I explicitly resort to ideal and law; only then do these appear before my consciousness invested with all the sanctions of society, and with the still more constraining approbation of my own reasoning insight; and thus morality confronts us as so far surpassing egotistical desire and the subjective caprice of inclination or pleasure. The opposition between duty and desire is thus comprehensible; an opposition and yet:—

‘When the celestial Wisdom dwells within  
It rules no longer from an outward throne.  
The galling chain of Law is only felt  
By the poor slave who would resist its sway:  
With man’s vain opposition disappears  
The o’erawing majesty of God.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Nehmt die Gottheit auf in euern Willen  
Und sie steigt von ihrem Weltenthron.  
Des Gesetzes strenge Fessel bindet  
Nur den Sklavensinn, der es verschmäht;  
Mit des Menschen Widerstand verschwindet  
Auch des Gottes Majestät.’

—SCHILLER’s *Das Ideal und das Leben*. The delicate beauty of the original can be only very imperfectly conveyed in English.—T.B.

We might yet say something of Evil. But is it necessary to do so? If Good is, objectively, action in the service of the welfare of the greatest possible number, then Evil is, objectively, the egotistical and the selfish, and we know already that, as such, it is natural and necessary: man is an egotist by nature. But Evil no more than Good can be original, for every phase of ethics is a development, and is an outcome of free will; consequently Evil too must, subjectively, be a matter of free will. Thus pertinacious adherence to the earliest developed side of my nature becomes weakness and indolence; clinging to the limitations of the Ego becomes superficiality and narrowness; the obstinacy and arrogance of the Ego in its would-be exclusive right becomes vainglory and presumption; the passionate rebellion and self-assertion of the Ego against the requirements and rules of society, the conscious refusal to devote one's-self to the general good, the insolent violation of what is indispensable for the welfare of all, finally, straying into the paths of passion, infatuation, and obduracy,—all these become habitual, and therefore more and more ineradicable.

But Evil, as well as Good, is a social product. It is the fault of society that it has not taken sufficiently opportune and energetic measures, that it has not chosen the right means to overcome selfishness, pride, and passion, that it has inefficiently performed its task as educator of the individual. Statistics of crime are always indicative of the unsound health of the whole social body. The culprit is not however ex-



onerated thereby. He is indeed a product of society; but it is with *his own will* that he has been made such a product; he is responsible for his indolence and weakness, his passionate pride and self-sufficiency. Thus the fact that society is itself partly to blame does not deprive it of the right to punish, so long at least as it remains conscious of its mission to improve those who have become wicked, and to prevent others from becoming so.

One cheering conclusion arises from this consideration of Evil, to which I shall at least allude. The Evil in human nature can never indeed be wholly eradicated from the world, and has to be combated anew in every individual born into society, but it is ever feebler than the Good. It is a case of the individual will in conflict with the will of the community, and the latter is always the stronger;—the selfish will of the individual in opposition to the will of society, which embraces the whole community and labours for the realisation of far-reaching and lofty aims. The devil after all is but a stupid devil, and fundamentally the world belongs to the Good and not to the Evil.

## LECTURE IV

### DUTY AND VIRTUE

WHAT is good? That is the question which we discussed in our last lecture. I may now recapitulate and condense the answer to it. That action is good which promotes the welfare of all or of the greatest possible number;—thus the consequences, the effects, of an action are the most important. But society can rely only upon him of whom it is satisfied that he will not only act rightly in individual cases, but in all cases, and at all times;—that he is steadfastly good. Society goes behind external appearances to the inward core, to the intention, to motives. And, apart from this, I, who know myself best, count myself good only when I devote myself unquestioningly and joyfully, when necessary, without any regard to personal inclination or advantage, to the service of the common welfare; only when I make a principle of this service, and have imported this principle into my character and incorporated it in my nature. Moral criticism ever withdraws further and further from the outward, and looks more and more deeply within. The higher the claims made on the moral nature and the more delicately the moral sense is developed, so much the more do we want

to know the motives as well as the consequences, the entire man as well as the isolated action, the inward element as well as the outward appearance, before we decide to call a man or his conduct good.. In the moral man himself, and in our judgment and estimate of him, we recognise a development, a progress, from the outward to the inward, from the individual to the whole, from the visible to the invisible. The standard which we seek is not only, as I have said, no magic wand, it is not even something already there which we have but to take up and apply,—which has only to be pointed out and given to us. It must first be wrought out, and again and again wrought out, by humanity as a whole and by every individual, and thus elaborated to a more and more delicate testing instrument. Ethics, therefore, cannot supply this standard, but can only describe how it may be formed and applied. It is formed by society, and every individual within society must form it anew for his own use.

And now let us proceed to the subject of the present lecture. We are to consider Virtue and Duty, what things are Good and what the Supreme Good. We now leave the region of abstraction and approach the phenomena and problems of practical life. This part of ethics has indeed been called practical morals. But first of all—how do we arrive at this three-fold division:—DUTY, VIRTUE, and the GOOD? It is an old traditional division, but there must be good reason, intrinsic justification, for it. Every action has consequences, and a moral action good consequences, which

contribute to the welfare of humanity ; therefore every product of morality is an actual good, and the science of the Good is the science of the effects—and, since these are contemplated beforehand, of the aims—of morality. But morality has motives also : to be able to act morally, a man must be moral ; the powers by whose activity these aims are attained and the good effects produced, the tendency of will which is most conducive to the welfare of all,—these are what we call virtue. Finally, morals is also, in so far as it addresses itself to motives and appeals to the conscious will, a rule, a law, an ideal ; and the system of the requirements into which the realisation of this ideal is divided in the individual is the science of duty. This science consists of rules for moral conduct, in cases in which it is not prompted by inclination.

Thus there are not really three co-ordinate divisions ; all have one and the same purport ;<sup>1</sup> only in each case it is regarded from a different point of view, is seen in a different light. It is not surprising therefore that at different times one or other of these three ways of regarding morals has come into greater prominence, while others have proportionately receded from view or become only stunted growths. The ancient Greeks, with whom happiness was the state of nature, knew nothing of duty and held virtue

<sup>1</sup> 'Beauty, Good and Knowledge are three sisters  
That doat upon each other, friends to man,  
Living together under the same roof,  
And never can be sunder'd without tears.'

TENNYSON.

to be the Supreme Good; hence with them ethics was essentially the science of virtue, whilst the science of duty was almost wholly unknown. On the other hand, Christianity, which arose from the Mosaic Law and held up heaven and hell as consolation and threat, regarded morals as the science of duty, adding thereto a transcendental doctrine of the Good. Lastly, in modern times we have (one might almost say, with pleasant variety) first given the preference to virtue, often in a sentimental or sensational way; then we have had the steel and iron of the idea of duty instilled into our blood by Kant; but since Schleiermacher we have, quite in accordance with the social tendency of the times, again brought the science of the Good into prominence and, in like manner, reduced the science of duty into a descriptive science of virtue.

It is of course impossible in the short time at my disposal to examine in its entire range even one of these divisions or forms of ethics; detail, moreover, would be rather out of place here, where we have to do only with the outlines of the whole. Hence I shall rather select from each of these three divisions a few special problems which are either generally interesting, or are especially useful as illustrating questions of principle and their application to actual life.

Duty accepts the law of morals and obeys it, and the aim of all moral education is to plant in our hearts respect for this ideal, and accustom us to obey this law. Now if the law were so formulated that we could in every individual case unquestioningly and surely deter-

mine our action by it—so that our will should be quite explicitly decided by it—it would be proportionately easy to act morally. But this is so far from being the case that Kant, for example, explicitly refrained from attaching any specific code to the law, and contented himself (in the mistaken opinion that even ‘the commonest, most uncultivated understanding can manage to get on very well without worldly wisdom’) with a purely formal acceptance of his categorical imperative. ‘Act in such a manner, that the maxim of thy will may in every case stand for the principle of a universal legislation.’ Such is the tenor of the fundamental law of pure, practical Reason. On the other hand, we too, who believe we have found in the principle of the common welfare at once the substance and measure of morality, must guard against the idea that man can thereby decide directly, and in every case, what he must do so that he may act morally. This cannot be, for two reasons. The first lies in the innumerable demands of life which press upon us every moment in motley variety, and of which we can never satisfy more than one; the second is the right of individuality, which, even within the whole, claims recognition for itself and will not submit to be stretched on the Procrustes bed of a common formula.

With respect to the first, a formula for selection among all simultaneously possible courses of action seems to spring directly from our principle. If it is one’s moral duty to procure or promote the greatest possible welfare of the greatest possible number, then

that course is always to be preferred by which the most wide-spread good is promoted, and the most comprehensive purposes served. And it directly follows from this that the Ego must in every case give place to others and renounce its own claims for the good of others.

But here various doubts arise. In the first place,—is it always so easy to reckon what will produce happiness or promote welfare,—can one always foresee whether or how an action may succeed, whether it will really turn out to be for the good of others?

‘While in my breast my deed was still mine own :  
But once sent forth from that secure recess  
Within the heart, its first maternal home,  
Launched out upon th’ unknown sea of life,  
It falls a prey to those insidious powers  
Which neither human wit nor art can rule.’<sup>1</sup>

In this respect the matter must be left for the most part to reasonable reflection and still more to individual discrimination ; and yet, considering the wanton power of chance and the limits of human skill and insight, there is the possibility of mistake and of neglecting what is more important and comprehensive. And then, is it really the case, for instance, that a woman who is connected with many charitable institutions and in that way exerts unwearied activity in a wide circle, acts, on that account alone, more morally than she who finds the centre of her work in her own home, makes her own circle happy, and renders her house an abode of calm peace and orderly comfort? Or am I obliged under all circumstances to give to the

<sup>1</sup> SCHILLER’S *Wallenstein*.

poor the sum of money which had been laid aside for a holiday trip, and so help others while renouncing my own interest and comfort? Such questions need only be stated to be answered in the negative. But why so? It would surely be in accordance with the foregoing formula to answer them in the affirmative. Even that is doubtful. Paul Heyse's verse is well known:—

‘Who makes a work of doing good,  
A bore is deemed—and so he should.’

And it is a question whether the £5 or so which had been intended for my holiday would really help the poor so much as the renunciation of this trip would harm me. For, if, in consequence of this renunciation, I should fall ill and become unfit for work, should I not become a burden to others; injure my family, my business; perhaps, as an official, injure the state which has to pay me even when I am unable to render it any service? And then, where can I exert the most effective influence,—in an extensive public sphere, or in the more limited circle lying immediately around me with all whose wants I am well acquainted? It is indeed a characteristic of society that it has arranged and organised itself into such circles, and that, by means of its disposition of purposes which we may call ‘a disposition of nature,’ it makes sure of every individual in his own place and occupation. To fulfil in the first place one's home duties, and to be honest in one's work or business, and then, so long as these first duties are not prejudiced thereby, to extend one's sphere and bestir one's-self, with whatever time and



power one has, in the service of the community, of a party, or of an association,—such, it seems to me, is the natural and wholesome position for a man or woman; and I think too that in this way society is best served. For in the end those wider public circles, and above all the nation, lose nothing thereby. If every one does his duty in his own place, he also fulfils his duty to the whole, to the state which reckons upon him being true to his own post. At exceptional times, in special cases—for example, during war—the case is reversed. Then private circles with their demands must give place to the more urgent necessities and claims of the whole, exceptional services are required of us and absolute self-forgetfulness becomes a duty.

But since I added to the rule, as a condition and limitation, that it is only with whatever time and power we have at our disposal that it becomes our duty to extend our sphere of action beyond private concerns, then with this consideration the individual momentum comes into play. I regard it as a matter of course that the more talented and wealthy members of society, the independent and leisurely, the childless too, for example, having most opportunity, are most bound to exercise activity and influence beyond their own private circle and to take a larger share than others in the service of the common interests; while for the majority the right and moral course is usually the natural one which lies nearest to them, the simple and the commonplace. But individuality has a right over against this duty. I must have

liberty and opportunity to assume the position for which I feel that I have capacity and strength ; I must cultivate my talent, I must be allowed to employ my energies in that direction towards which my aptitudes tend. I must first myself become a personality in order to be able to be something for others, wherefore I must also have liberty to attain this personality ; I must in my action satisfy myself so that I may be able to content and gratify others, wherefore I have a right to such a configuration of my nature and lot in life as shall satisfy me. For men whose nature has been embittered do not render the service which they could and ought to render, and they are often enough a burden and distress to their neighbours. Thus the Ego, with its claims to free development and full satisfaction, gains acknowledgment even from the standpoint of the Greatest Happiness principle.

But in these relations there lies too an abounding source of what is called collision of duties of which we have already spoken in another connection. The traditional example of this in the morals of the old casuistical school is indeed primitive and childish enough,—that, viz., of a Christian theological candidate who is asked what is his duty if a Christian, a Jew, and a Mohammedan fell into the water at the same time,—which of the three he ought first to save ? Talleyrand gave the best answer to this—in quite a different connection—when he was sitting one day between Madame Récamier and Madame de Staël and was asked by the latter which of the two he would

save if both together fell into the water. 'Oh!' said Talleyrand, 'Madame de Staël knows so many things, that no doubt she could also swim.' But the matter becomes considerably more serious in cases such as the following. A poor widow's son, who is conscious of artistic aptitude and power, is confronted with the problem whether, for his mother's sake, he should renounce an opportunity offered him for the cultivation of his talent, or whether, in the interest of his talent, he would be justified in requiring from his mother years of sacrifice and privation. In such a case indeed no rule of duty is adequate,—no rule can relieve the poor fellow from the pain of choice and decision. And the more delicately sensitive the youth is, the more difficult—not the more easy—the choice becomes, because his inclination moves him so decidedly to determine on one side. May he obey it on that account? or must he not rather decide against it in the fear that his motive may be contaminated by such an inclination? But 'no principle of a universal legislation' can decide for him; for the son's care for his mother would come under such a principle quite as much as the cultivation of all his talents: decision can come only by moral discrimination, after careful consideration of all individual circumstances; and even this discrimination is not infallible, nor can it protect him subjectively from all reflections and feelings of compunction. And the world—how will it judge his decision? Opinion is almost certain to be divided,—some people will applaud

his decision, while others will condemn it. The final, decisive verdict will be given only after the result is seen. If the young man becomes a great artist, we say he could not have acted otherwise,—he was quite right. If however his talent fails and becomes exhausted, and he remains on the grade of mediocrity, then we pronounce the severest judgment on the egotist who required from his mother heavy sacrifices in vain. In vain: and yet could he—was it his fault that he did not—foresee that his talent would not fulfil its promise, that his artistic gifts would not mature? Finally, it may be questioned whether this judgment of the world is so very different from self-criticism. It is moreover essentially a judgment according to the result, not according to the motives!

There is in truth then no infallible recipe, no mathematical formula, for decision in case of collision of duties. But should we regret that, thus thrown upon ourselves, we have, along with the right of free decision, also the possibility of wrong decision? Do we not gain in life what we lose and must dispense with in theory?

Another question, related to this one of colliding duties, may be answered in the same connection. It is whether there may be a *Permissible*, and whether there are *Adiaphora*, *i.e.* indifferent actions which are neither moral nor immoral. The idea of the permissible is a double one: negatively, it signifies what is not expressly forbidden by a law; positively, what may be done only with the assent of another person. Neither meaning, it will be seen, is based upon ethical grounds.

It is the business of authority to forbid an action ; it is the business of education, in the broad sense of the word, besides prohibition, also expressly to sanction an action. In the first sense, there is a permissible from the point of view of the law and the state ; in the second sense, there is a permissible for children or for persons who have not advanced beyond the dependent and irresponsible stage of childhood and education. In the former case, it is not a subject of obligation, and consequently this province is reserved for the moral cultivation of the individual—a province not occupied by the law, and therefore left exclusively to the superintendence of morality. It is, for instance, allowed by the law to lend money at six per cent. ; but whether in any particular case this ought to be done, or may morally be done, is left to the decision of the moral individual, who in certain circumstances pronounces that to be morally bad and unwarrantable which is legally not forbidden—therefore allowed. In the second sense, as assent and approval, permission is the removal of a restraint from the uneducated or half-educated, perhaps a direct attempt to render him gradually independent, and at the same time a support for his indecision, as when he is told : ‘ I, for my part, have no objection to your doing so and so, but whether you will make use of the freedom acceded to you I must—or I will—leave to your own discretion.’ Thus it is ever a sign of moral dependence and immaturity when man appeals in questions of morality to an authority, not for advice merely—the most highly moral man

may seek advice, for the question at issue may be one requiring deliberation and foresight,—but directly for permission and dispensation : the confessional and the power of the keys are by no means moral institutions.

In the view of ethics therefore there cannot strictly speaking be any permissible. Just as little is there a morally indifferent or *adiaphoron*. This seems at first sight still more paradoxical. How often it seems perfectly indifferent whether I do something or leave it undone ; whether I act in one way or another ; whether I go for a walk or amuse myself at home ; whether I make one of a festive company or absent myself ! Moreover, such outward matters as eating and drinking are surely morally indifferent ? And yet—is eating and drinking too much, is spending too much time in outdoor exercise, is lounging idly about, morally indifferent ? or, on the other hand, is it morally allowable or wholesome to reduce one's-self and make one's-self weak and ill by fasting, or to become a hypochondriac by continually staying indoors ? Can one morally justify a man who misanthropically withdraws and abstains from all good-fellowship, all pleasure, all enjoyment of life ? Thus even in actions apparently most indifferent, moral duties are presented to us which we can either neglect or fulfil. The appearance of indifference arises in the first place from the circumstance that the customary here coincides in many ways with the natural, or at all events has become so habitual that it regulates itself, as it were, and is gone through as a mechanical action. The appearance of indifference arises still more

from the isolation of the special case. And yet the whole, the character, the habits of my life and my conception of life, are manifest in the individual action; and so,—since every single action, as it is an outcome of the whole, has also a counter-influence on it,—there is in truth nothing quite insignificant, entirely indifferent. Even in eating and drinking, we show ourselves educated or uneducated beings; the virtues of moderation and cleanliness, order and regularity, come into play.

Even dancing and theatre-going—I may at least touch in this connection also upon the old disputed question between Lutherans and Pietists about what things are indifferent—even dancing and theatre-going are moral actions, provided, in the case of the former, the pure mind and glad heart, the mastery of the will over the body and its movements, appear in all innocence and grace; and provided, in the case of the latter, the recreation sought becomes a source of spiritual culture and improvement. In the warfare of the Pietists against these pleasures, they manifested their mediæval narrowness and their morally worthless rejection of the world. Yet they too were right when they showed that participation in such things should be discontinued whenever they furnish occasion to a sensual nature or to a giddy mind for impure thoughts and for gratification of vanity, or whenever they debar men from earnest moral concentration and reflective thought. Therefore let every one answer for himself in this matter. Ethics can at most

say: 'Let this too be embraced in the scope of thy moral nature!'

If then the permissible and morally indifferent, as distinguished from duty, is, as it were, a *Not yet* for the moral man, a province not as yet occupied by him (this position, however, could not occur in a thoroughly moral personality); then, on the other hand, there arises, in the very highest sphere of morality, so much the stronger reason for the assertion that a *Super-moral* is possible. We have to ask whether a man can do more than his duty? whether there is such a thing as moral merit, --a morally *Meritorious*? This doctrine of the meritoriousness of good works and of the *opus supererogativum*, it is well known, was matured by the Catholic church in the Middle Ages. This is all the more remarkable considering Jesus' saying to His disciples: '. . . when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do.' How then did man arrive at this idea of meritoriousness? I shall consider this question irrespective of historical grounds of elucidation derived from the course of development of the Christian church and its teaching on the subject; irrespective of the spirit of mercenary craving for reward characteristic of Judaism; and irrespective of that over-estimation of martyrdom which originated in the times of persecution, and of the desire to create an equivalent for martyrdom in all kinds of ascetic acts. I speak here chiefly of the moral view which is the foundation of this belief in the possibility of a meritorious or super-meritorious.



As the permissible and indifferent isolates the individual action, so too the praise of merit looks exclusively to the beneficial results of such an individual action, without at all considering the personality of the agent. He who renders a specially valuable service to us or to his country earns merit for himself from those he has benefited,—no importance is attached to the motives; it is thus a one-sided utilitarian standpoint, from which note is taken only of the external. In the second place, however, we usually apply only an average standard to what others do, and to what we think we are entitled to require of them; whatever is below this standard we regard as reprehensible or contrary to duty; whatever surpasses it, we regard as meritorious, or even as super-meritorious. It is thus a low ideal, a want of high-striving moral idealism that lies at the root of this doctrine of merit. But here too the inward, the personal, is overlooked. To the man who rises above this average standard it is a duty also to act above the average: this is no longer a matter of choice for him,—it is no special merit for him. If he neglects it, he sinks below his own level, is deficient in what may be claimed from him, falls short of his ideal, in short, he acts contrary to duty.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'We strictly owe to Him conformity with our own ideal. Short of this, we fail of our due, and incur positive demerit. Attaining it with ever such exactitude, we simply fulfil our obligation and can pretend to no merit before Him. . . . But in our dealings with our fellow-men, it is *their* ideal, as recognised by us, that measures their claim upon us in the eye of social justice; . . . it is not every unfaithfulness to God that constitutes a violation of the rights of men.'—MARTINEAU: *Types of Ethical Theory*.

Let us note here one point. Extraordinary occasions—take for instance wars of liberation—confront us with special claims; if we are equal to them, we rise to the occasion and render also exceptional, but not excessive, not superfluous, not super-meritorious, service. But let every one see to it that lust for renown and glory, vanity and ambition, do not induce him to strive to render some prominent service, whilst nearer duties are neglected. Perhaps not a few of the ‘holy’ men and women of the Middle Ages would have to be judged so if we could get a glimpse into the round of their nearest duties. Moreover, we may be justified in doubting whether they really did any good with their extravagant asceticism, whether they contributed anything to the welfare of their contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. I am too thoroughly convinced of the worthlessness of such unnatural and unhealthy suppression of legitimate human instincts to have the least recognition or admiration for the bravura shown in the sphere of asceticism.

There is one thing to be adduced for the doctrine of *duty* from our whole consideration. If there is an average standard for the moral man and his services, then it behoves every man to place that standard, in his own case, not as low as possible, but as high as possible, and so to cultivate himself that any great mission, any great occasion, may find him prepared; it is his *duty* to give his moral ideal an ever higher and broader range, so that moral idealism may inspire him to render the best and most difficult service that the world, life, and the times can require of him. For

moral enthusiasm is the most superb blossom of morality just because it never imagines that it does more than it must do. The enthusiast cannot act otherwise than as he does when, possessed, carried away, impelled by a great idea, he accomplishes something great in its service; and yet he is only fulfilling his duty, even though he should take upon himself the most difficult task, though he should perform the most exceptional good services. But let us glance over an entire human life, our own life:—Did we always stand on this moral height, were we at all times equal to our task?—were we always possessed and carried on by ideal moral enthusiasm, and ever ready to bear onward and accomplish the highest?—in short, have we invariably done our duty? In regard to such questions it well becomes us to be silent, and the saying about unprofitable servants comes home even to the best of us.

The duties of the individual are divided into duties towards one's-self and duties towards one's neighbour. Are there, after all, any duties towards one's-self? From the principle of the common welfare it seems difficult to answer this question in the affirmative. It may indeed be pointed out that, among the greatest possible number to whose welfare morality should contribute, I also, the agent, am included, and should be taken into account. But, on the other hand, this might be directly met by the objection that man's own inclination, the innate instinct of self-preservation, already prompts him to care for himself; and that

consequently there is no question in this case of commandment, or law, or of duty. But again I may remind you, in opposition to this objection, that inclination prompts us to many cares for our own comfort which may not be morally indifferent,—may not always be justifiable; and that therefore, as we have seen, the pleasure and comfort of the moment must often be renounced in the interest of life as a whole. Looked at in this way then moderation and temperance, self-control and care, become indeed duties, real duties towards ourselves, by the fulfilment of which we may preserve ourselves and our bodies in permanent health and strength, and steel our muscles and our wills for the struggle for existence.

Is self-preservation in this ethical sense really a duty towards one's-self only? We have seen before how we may injure others and trespass upon their comfort and happiness if we allow illness to come upon us by ascetic exaggerations or by neglect. Thus in every case self-duties may be reduced into duties towards others. Whatever injures, disturbs, or ruins me, produces wider and ever wider circles of harm, and self-neglect invariably involves suffering for others also. It seems to me then that this division will not hold good; in every case each part becomes involved in, and complicated with, the other. And it is quite evident, if we regard morality as a social product, that the more a man knows and feels himself to be a member of society, and included in a social community, the more do self-duties become duties towards others;

and the more surely, on the other hand, do I contribute to my own happiness and welfare by the fulfilment of my duties towards others.

On the same lines must be sought also the solution of the problem of moral judgment on suicide and its justification. How very various are the considerations and feelings which move us one way and the other and determine our judgment with regard to a suicide with the victim of which we were well acquainted! The youth who, because he is not promoted from the second to the third form, forthwith resorts to the revolver, deserves unmitigated reproach for his silly freak :—for the pair of lovers who, at the first difficulty, resolve to die together, we have a half-sympathetic, half-contemptuous shrug of the shoulders at the weakness and sentimentality evident in a premature resolve which shows so little knowledge of the heart and of life :—when a ruined drunkard in shame and want puts a violent end to his worthless existence, we see in the act the natural, almost necessary, nay for the most part even physically unavoidable, conclusion of a guilt-laden life :—but when a man, perhaps despised by society though innocent, and in any case not essentially unworthy, does violence to himself after severe struggle and conflict; or when death itself seems to be the only means of escaping from dishonour and from the otherwise inevitable doing or suffering something unworthy, then our feeling is one of the deepest sympathy, and at the same time we feel as if we ourselves shared in the guilt of a deed which has ensued from a social code of morality to which

we also are subject,—from the verdict of public opinion to whose judgment, containing both truth and falsehood, we too are in the habit of assenting. Finally, when we glance over the statistics of suicide as a whole, we experience a feeling of horror at the human misery which confronts us, as it were, through the array of figures, and at the terrible regularity with which that misery operates. Before all others, however, the common feeling of humanity prevails: the more natural the instinct of life, the avowed love of life, and especially the horror of death appear, so much the more do I feel urged upon me sympathy, overpowering all moral judgment, with the man who has taken upon him to do such an unnatural deed. What torment and suffering he must have endured, what straits and misery, what inward conflict and extreme despair, before he took such a step! Therefore I cannot endorse the easily-spoken saying about the cowardice of the man who commits suicide. Certainly the unhappy one had no longer the courage to live, had not capability and strength to carry on the battle of life; and so far he was indeed wanting in courage; but cowardly—no, it is not cowardly, to prefer death to life,—rather, on the other hand, it is often only cowardice which prevents the suicide and preserves the unfortunate in life.

We must then distinguish carefully between different cases,—the moral judgment cannot always be the same. Suicide is a morally reprehensible act of selfishness in cases in which the murderer leaves a legacy of

unsolved difficulties to his relatives, and so plunges them into misery from which he egotistically makes his escape. Or else the deed is the termination of a life full of guilt and shame, really only the final casting off an existence which had become worthless; and then it is only an assurance that the man, in most cases also physically ruined and broken down, has become helpless and effete to the inmost core of his moral nature;—but it is also sometimes a sign that the consciousness of this moral nullity and worthlessness has not been quite absent, that a spark of the man's radical better nature has revived, but was not strong enough to kindle a purifying fire. Or finally, in exceptional cases—in that of Hannibal, for instance, who took poison to avoid falling into the hands of his mortal enemies and being condemned to suffer indignities from their hatred and brutality—suicide becomes a morally necessary defence, a moral heroism which calls for quite a special judgment and admits of complete justification. Cato's stoical heroism indeed reminds us to some extent of melodramatic and theatrical effects; Hannibal's end, on the other hand, appears to us, scarcely heroic, but simply an act of morally justifiable defence and necessity. In this respect, even the Christian Fathers of the Church hesitated when, in the times of the Diocletian persecutions, they had to consider the suicide of noble women, who preferred death by their own hands to dishonour by brutal violence. The Church, in branding suicide nowadays by refusal of sacred burial, believes that she is undoubtedly acting in the service of society, in

whose interest it lies to prevent, or as far as possible to diminish, suicide ; but let her beware lest in doing so she lose the love of some of her members and strike too severely,—not the dead man,—but his innocent relatives; and thus neglect that moral tolerance which is prescribed to her by the saying of her Founder : ‘ He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her ! ’

For society, however, every suicide is a sign that all is not well within it ; the statistics of suicide is one of the tests of the health of the social body. Therefore it is important not only to combat the symptoms, but to strike at the source of the evil ; instead of cruelly censuring the dead, it is more to the purpose to improve the living and, in truly moral compassion, to remove the causes of material misery and moral degradation of the masses. Here too statistics of morality, resulting from observation of the masses, prove most important aids to social ethical reform ; and even scientific ethics, in so far as it bears critically and beneficially on moral life, must not neglect this source of empirical knowledge.

Finally, there is yet another question : Are there exceptions to the rules of duty ?—or rather, more correctly,—Are there rules of duty without exceptions ? ‘ Thou shalt not kill ’ seems to be such a rule. And yet—not only am I justified, but I owe it to myself and to my family—I am therefore morally bound—for the necessary protection of myself or others, to strike down the violent aggressor ; and indeed the state demands organised wholesale murder as one of the highest duties from its citizens in time of war. This certainly recalls



problems of the widest, most comprehensive nature, viz., internally, the more perfect organisation of legal protection, and externally, the avoidance as far as possible of any war. But we do not live in such a perfect state of society; enduring peace is—a beautiful dream. Until it is realised the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ is in point of fact not absolute.

This moreover seems to hold good with rules of duty generally. One alone claims to be without exception, viz. that of truthfulness. And yet we cannot see how and why this alone should have attained such absolute acceptance. Does practice agree with this theory? No; as a mortal blow is morally justified in case of necessary defence, so in similar circumstances a necessary falsehood must be morally permissible or even directly required by duty. The old example of the schools indeed substantiates this position: a madman comes to a helpless woman who has just concealed in her house one whom he is pursuing, and asks her ‘which way the fugitive has gone. If she tells him the truth, the refugee is lost; if she remains silent, the madman will understand her silence and will search for and find his victim; therefore she deceives him, directs him another way, and by this falsehood saves a human life. Another much quoted example is that of the physician who deceives his patient as to the danger of his condition in order to spare him excitement: in this case to tell the truth would be directly contrary to duty. Lastly, in war, the soldier, the general, who may gain the victory for his army by a deception, or the statesman who by such

means may avert from his nation a calamitous war,—should they hesitate to use it?—shall we call them immoral for doing so? It seems to me that is simple enough. But where then lies the boundary between the moral and the justifiable on the one hand and machiavellism and immorality on the other,—at what point does the end cease to justify the means? Wherein is to be found the ground and justification of such falsehoods? And on the other hand how comes it that untruthfulness seems in all circumstances to be forbidden? Truthfulness, ethically considered, is required for the general welfare; falsehood destroys confidence and loosens all bonds of moral association; the liar is consequently dangerous to the community, and yet he is—except for perjury—beyond the reach of the law. This is why society attaches so much importance—theoretically—to truthfulness, and requires of every form of moral education the inculcation of this commandment; for if society is to exist at all, it must have truthfulness. But here too may be seen the compass and limits of truthfulness: even truthfulness exists for the sake of human intercourse, as a means for the preservation of society and fellowship. Hence it is only when a strict adherence to the commandment involves danger to the community and proves a hindrance to men in their social relations,—then, but only then, does it give way to the higher command. But, because this doctrine may be so easily abused; because the inclination to apply it to self-interest and make use of it for immoral purposes is so wide-spread; and above all because the

prospect of impunity is so great and so seductive,—this is why society condemns all falsehood and lays such great stress on the cultivation of truthfulness. And it is right in doing so. But ethics is in the right too, in pointing out the exceptions and their justification;—it does not on that account speak in favour of lying and the liar.

In this connection we might note too the conventional falsehood, ‘Mrs. — is not at home!’ For the sake of our children and servants it would be better to substitute for that a less objectionable phrase, ‘Mrs. — does not receive to-day,’ if that can be accepted by the visitor without resentment. On the other hand one may, putting aside foolish rigour and without much scruple, make use in social intercourse of the current forms and phrases of politeness (such as ‘I am glad . . .,’ ‘I am happy to see you,’ ‘Your obedient servant,’ etc.), knowing that the person to whom they are addressed receives and regards them, as the speaker intends them to be regarded, as current coin with which in social intercourse we do not impose upon each other, but which we use as forms having their own significance and warrant in so far as they are intended to render that intercourse pleasant and gracious, and to keep it free from injurious tartness and clumsy rudeness. Or is clownishness moral?

I have lingered so long over the science of Duty that I can say only a few words on the science of Virtue. The old problem, whether virtue can be taught or not, has in course of time been generalised in the greater

social one, whether intellectual progress contributes to the improvement of morals, whether with knowledge virtue also has increased in the world, whether culture makes men more moral? We shall speak of this later on in another connection. It will suffice here to remark that for virtue, as a practice and habitual tendency of the will, exercise above all is necessary; but that at the same time certain natural dispositions have a repressing or a helpful influence, and make this virtue to one man, and that to another, in itself more easy. Courage, for instance, is more easily cultivated by the man with strong nerves, and yet many a time the strong man trembles when the physically feeble is strong with moral courage. This gives us an answer to the old discussion as to the unity or multiplicity of virtue in favour of the latter—in spite of all unity of heart, all uniformity of character. Ethics indeed in many respects still retains the old classification into the four cardinal virtues,—wisdom or prudence, courage, temperance, and justice; and of the three Christian virtues, hope, faith, and love, we add to the four love, as the virtue of all virtues, whilst hope and faith are of course no virtues. But these five will not be found sufficiently inclusive. One cannot justly include the specifically Christian patience-in-suffering along with the active virtue,—courage; nor yet for the lesser qualities which adorn human existence and which are so important for social life, viz. cleanliness and neatness, thrift and liberality,—could one easily find a place in such a classification. Here again we find that life is

richer than theory: with the new duties which the progress of culture calls forth, there are evolved new capacities to fulfil them. The science of virtue is very intimately connected with that of the Good: the virtuous disposition is undivided, but the virtues into which it distributes itself are as various as the spheres and tasks in which it behoves us to be morally active. But it is now time to turn our attention to those social arrangements which duty bids us form and embrace in our moral code; in which opportunity is afforded us for virtuous activity; and which humanity regards as its highest possessions,—those things which give substance and worth to existence, and in whose service the life of the moral man is passed, finding therein satisfaction and content.

## LECTURE V

### PARTIAL GOOD AND THE SUPREME GOOD

WE have to consider to-day, in various applications and forms, the question of the Supreme Good. Let us begin quite practically with the old problem of so-called theodicy, viz. whether the virtuous man is necessarily happy?

If we include under happiness the welfare which is dependent on the outward course of nature,—of course not! As God 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,' the hail-storm ravages the field of the virtuous as well as that of the vicious; the worthy man is no more secure from accidents than the worthless; even the best may perish in railway disasters or shipwreck; and Jesus' saying 'Of those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them: think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem?' holds good to the present day and over all the world. And even the success which a man earns in society by the work of his hands, or the power of his brain, is not invariably or necessarily dependent on his virtue. The skilful workman, the clever specu-

lator, the brave officer, the able official, the versatile and agreeable conversationalist get on in life, and their morality—does it come so essentially into question in the matter? But on the other hand is virtue really quite a useless weapon in the struggle for existence? You cannot suppose that I think so. To be proficient in one's calling and amiable in one's intercourse with others is in itself a virtue;—if morality is a product of society, society will uphold it and respect it as worthy of respect;—will necessarily value it and, as it were, set a social price upon it;—such virtues as thrift, love of order, honesty, in themselves help their possessor on in the world: such is the rule, in spite of all exceptions to the contrary.

But there is another source of happiness: the good conscience, the inward satisfaction and blissful feeling of the virtuous. It may indeed be asked whether that is always so;—and whether, on the other hand, the sting of misery always torments the wicked? Both statements are open to question. In the first case we must admit that disparity between outward lot and inward worth has power to impair the joy of well-doing; and in the second case we cannot deny the possibility that a man may get so accustomed to wrong-doing as to blunt and deaden the sting of remorse within him, and so may feel tolerably at ease notwithstanding his wickedness. Yet the lack of happiness in the first case (which, considered more carefully, is but a species of envy of him who without the troublesome and indirect means of morality has attained outward success and appears to

be happy) is only a sign that virtue pure and unquestioning is not yet present; it is the vice of self-righteousness which bears in itself its own punishment, and confirms precisely what it seeks to refute: he who weighs and measures in such a way has his thoughts still too much occupied with himself, has not yet freed himself sufficiently from egotism, and acts from the immoral point of view of reward and punishment. In the second case too, in spite of the apparent happiness of the sinful man we can count but little on his feeling of inward satisfaction: such an habitual sinner has indeed rid himself of remorse, but at what a cost! What desolation of the spiritual life, what isolation is implied in this silence of the conscience!

For what is conscience? It is not, as some may have supposed, a new ethical conception, which we had to introduce here as an element scientifically determined or susceptible of determination, after all only a more popular expression, in some respects, too, corrupted and obscured by dogmatism, for the aggregate of the feelings, affections, and judgments of the moral man. Rather, if one examines more carefully, conscience is seen to be primarily a kind of after-sensation, allied to remorse but more comprehensive. If I have committed a sin, conscience *stirs*,—sometimes clearly and unmistakably, but in most cases in the form of dull oppression, vague uneasiness and anxiety,—and tells me that by my selfish bad conduct I have violated and disregarded certain relations to my neighbours and to society, and that this may have disastrous consequences



for myself. Of course I can foresee, even before the actual deed, these compromising and disagreeable results, and then the voice of conscience is not only reproachful, but warning and dissuasive. But we know already that morality proceeds from the outward to the inward, from the individual to the whole; and so conscience too becomes more and more elevated and refined. The feeling of honour enters into it and makes me conscious of the danger into which, by means of my past or future act, my whole position, my worth in the eyes of society, the respect and consideration of my equals and friends, of my relatives and family, may and must fall. One need only revert to one's-self in order to recognise precisely this aspect of conscience as the prevailing one. Finally, to penetrate to the root of the matter, by my sinful deed I cease to be a moral man; my better self, *i.e.* all the good which had previously taken root in me and become a part of my nature, reacts against it; the good man in me must despise me for it; my moral dignity and worth, the integrity and unity of my inward nature, is endangered, and rebels against the evil. And moreover all the reasonable reflections and considerations, all the memories and traditions which the Good, with the aid of the association of ideas, arouses and as it were appeals to in me,—all these unite to increase the feelings of uneasiness and anxiety, dissatisfaction and self-contempt. The good in me—by virtue of its origin the representative to me of human society itself, and of all the good that therein lives and works from generation

to generation—sits in judgment on my evil deed, pursues it even into the furthest lurking-place of its secret motives, and condemns it without mercy or compunction, in spite of all excuse and extenuation. Thus conscience is ever the expression of my whole moral position, the measure of the moral level at which I stand, and therefore at the same time the point at which the bonds unite which connect me with my fellow-men. Wrong-doing is the injury or rending of one or more of these bonds, and conscience is the vivid consciousness of this injury. In acting wrongly, I have acted selfishly, I have forgotten the regard due to others, I have isolated myself;—hence evil-doing is almost invariably accompanied by a feeling of loneliness and desolation; and if in any case that feeling is lacking, it is because loneliness has become a habit, a second nature. An evil life is always a poor life; the consciousness of sin is a feeling of insufficiency and emptiness; the bad man is unhappy even when externally most prosperous, as the life of the inwardly lonely is barren and empty. On the other hand the good man is he whose relations to his neighbours are well ordered, the bonds well secured and mutually strengthened. He is thus the richer, his life fuller and more blissful. But it is here the same as in bodily health: the sensibility of the healthy man is latent, and in the same way the good conscience, this feeling of moral health in the man to whom the Good has become habitual, scarcely rises to conscious utterance. Only the Evil makes itself loudly and significantly heard; and the more sensitive the man—the more

morally cultured,—the more painfully does he suffer from those disturbances and irritations, and the more does his conscience torment him after a bad action, so that one might say—though it seems paradoxical—that the good man suffers much more than the bad man from the stings of conscience.

Is the virtuous man happy then? ‘Self-content’ will not of course satisfy the definition of happiness, which, as ‘the condition of a reasonable being in the world with whom throughout life all prospers according to wish and will,’ is still unrealised. Perhaps, influenced by reminiscences of stoicism, and by Kant’s tenet of the production of happiness by means of the maxims of virtue, we concern ourselves in too one-sided a way about the influence of virtue on happiness, and too seldom about the effect of happiness on virtue. The matter is, I think, seen in a new and peculiar light if we put the question so: Does happiness render a man virtuous? Let us amplify this question into the general, historical one: What effect has continued prosperity on nations? I think history has given a clear enough answer. Capua has become proverbial. An effortless and lasting condition of prosperity unbraces and enervates men, armies become undisciplined, whole races effeminate, states infirm of purpose. And what applies to entire nations holds good of the individual. For him too misfortune—what the world calls misfortune—is necessary to strengthen and support him, to keep him from sinking into indolence and apathy. Nay more—man actually needs misfortune

in order to be happy. The life of feeling depends essentially on contrast; harmonious sounds are grateful to us in contrast to the annoyance of irritating noises which with intermittent jarring torment us hour after hour. In the same way the feeling of happiness requires the contrast of misfortune in order to be experienced at all. To have revealed to men and made them conscious of the blessing of adversity and suffering is the greatest and noblest service which Christianity has rendered to our race: the Sufferer on the Cross in the character of a Servant of humanity is surrounded by the shining and glorious halo of patience and endurance.<sup>1</sup> And healthy human nature is at all times a safeguard against this idea leading to permanent asceticism or to undue suppression of the natural desire for happiness; although such asceticism was indeed very prevalent throughout many centuries of the Middle Ages. .

Once more: Is the virtuous man entirely happy? We might in the first place interpose the counter question: Is he then entirely virtuous? and then, as that must be negated, answer the first question with the paradox: Fortunately not! For by misfortune it is made sure that man remains capable and sensible of happiness; because it is as necessary to his happiness as salt is to food, as indispensable for his virtue as fire is

<sup>1</sup> 'The higher life begins for us when we renounce our own will to bow before a Divine law. That seems hard to you. It is the portal of wisdom, and freedom, and blessedness. . . . That wisdom is the religion of the Cross.'—GEORGE ELIOT: *Savonarola* in *Romola*.

for the tempering of steel. Without adversity, without suffering, there is no virtue; and yet the virtue of the individual is for the whole more necessary, and for himself more valuable, than happiness.

With this the question of the Supreme Good too is settled. If we take the Supreme Good to be happiness, alone or together with virtue as its effect, then there is for the individual no *Sumum Bonum*, no Supreme Good. *Mephistopheles'* words apply here:—'Trust me, this perfect light is only for a god; for man must day and night suffice;' and the highest Good is in the end but a certain reasonable distribution and alternation of good and bad days. Does this afford any occasion for a pessimistic view of life? I think not. This kind of pessimism, which founds upon the preponderant adversity of individual existence, always seems to me as on one side a philosophy of envy, and on the other a mistaken conception or ignoring of the healthy, natural wholesomeness in humanity. In what circumstances do we ever weigh and measure the happiness or unhappiness of our lives so anxiously and nicely as the pessimists, these Pietists of the modern world, are in the habit of doing, with their continual feeling the pulse of their own sensations of happiness? Some mornings indeed we speak in a sad and peevish mood of the treadmill of our occupation, of the worry of daily work which awaits us again, and the sky of our existence looks grey and dull. But is it not true that if our occupation and work were taken from us with all their cares, troubles, and restraints, it would not be any

advantage to us; but that on the contrary we should be robbed of the best of our possessions, viz. the power and the opportunity of doing good? Hence I often cannot help thinking that those who would allot to man unperturbed eternal bliss in the present or hereafter do not know what they are entailing upon him; that rather the way of the world tends decidedly to our good in alternating days of rest and work, joyous and sad hours, sunshine and rain, prosperity and adversity. For it is not necessary that I should be happy; but it is indispensably necessary that I should be good. And if happiness and the reverse both bring moral dangers, the greater perils perhaps lie on the side of continual sunshine.

That we have not been able to arrive at any clear result in our inquiry as to the relation of virtue and happiness, and as to the Supreme Good, may perhaps be due to our having hitherto confined ourselves in an erroneous one-sided way to the individual man. And yet if, and so far as, morality is a social product, in so far it is also happiness. And here it may be we arrive at a Supreme Good which we have nowhere found, nor ever could find, in the individual life. We have already been carried beyond the individual even by the most peculiarly individual element in morality, viz. conscience, as the intersecting point of social and individual ethics. If even duty and virtue—which are peculiarly ideas of an individualistic ethic, and which therefore, wherever they prevail, confine the doctrine of morals to the limits of such an ethic—be-

come intelligible in their origin and influence only by means of the inclusion of the individual in a society and in a community, then also must the doctrine of the Good and of the Supreme Good be consummated only in the wider compass of a SOCIAL ETHIC.

‘Assuredly,’ says Schleiermacher, ‘the virtue of the individual is also a Good, and rightly understood so is his happiness, only not his particular Good, but a common Good produced, and also productive, in the social circle of which he is a member; nor are his virtue and happiness two separate things, but both in their correlation form a unity which itself is, properly and in virtue of its spiritual import, a common Good; but in this way of regarding the matter there can be no question at all of the Supreme Good.’ Thus here too we find, not the isolated individual but an interunion and a whole; nothing absolute and concluded, but something in process of growth and which has ever to be wrought out; an ideal which is still every moment being realised; the progressive solution of the moral problems of humanity and the ever more thorough penetration of all the aims and means, all the doings and achievements of humanity, by the spirit of morality; including in this moral aggregate the individual, as on the one hand a serving member and on the other a partaker by right in all the blessings of the culture afforded by such a pervading spirit of morality.

This takes us back to our point of departure in these ethical discussions. There, at the very beginning, we spoke of the family, conventional custom, religion, the

state and the law, as the objective powers which confront man in an authoritative attitude, take him into their service, and educate him to morality. In the present connection we have to treat of these same powers and forms of life as the moral possessions of humanity; and we have now to add to them whatever influences operate in the same direction—such as, to instance at least one province—Art. There is one point we must not forget here: what appears to us now as a moral Good, and part of the Supreme Good, has not been so from the beginning, nor does it continue to be so under all possible circumstances. Therein lies the distinction between morality and culture: they are not identical at any moment in the process of history; the compass of culture is wider, but the worth of morality is higher; and therefore only those fruits of culture are permanently valuable which are at the same time moral and are employed in the service of morality. Thus, in respect of these fruits of culture, the individual too has the free right of criticism, of reform and of opposition, wherever these fruits are not yet moral, or even hinder and impede morality; only he must take good care that he exercises this right really in the spirit of the higher morality; for only in that case are criticism, reform, and opposition morally justified—not acts of caprice.

In order at least to sketch the outline of this relation of morality to culture, allow me to point out a few facts. Marriage, the family, have, as it were apart from ethical considerations, an existence in which they serve



solely for the gratification of egotistical instincts; the state has in point of fact arisen in some cases from immoral acts of violence on the part of individuals; and even religion itself has been manifested in forms of which the most degrading desires, and even sensuality and cruelty, have been the leading characteristics. Thus all these may in certain circumstances cease to be good. Consider the misery of a ruined marriage tie, to dissolve which may therefore become a moral duty; or consider the suffering of a state under tyrannic rule or dissolving in anarchy, when at last nothing but revolt from below, or a *coup d'état* from above, has power to help, so that one is constrained to speak of a moral right of rebellion; or, finally, consider the bewilderment and perplexity of a soul under the power of a religion which has degenerated into mere form and ceremony, or of a dogma which has become untenable on account of its inconsistency with life and knowledge,—a dogma in respect of which unbelief stands higher morally than the notorious 'sacrifice of the intellect' or the much practised hypocrisy of outward conformity without inward accordance or living sympathy.

But on the other hand all these arrangements and institutions, however they may have arisen, are intimately connected with the sympathetic feelings of man, which play an important part in them and find only in them full satisfaction. Strengthened by these feelings, and under their influence, these institutions are further developed and cultivated, so as to become in the service of

humanity more and more effective supporters of the principle of the common welfare. So must marriage, the family, state, church, art, science, and other such forms and arrangements of civilisation, embodied in the moral code and in human society, become moral possessions of the highest rank, parts and organs of the Supreme Good. What a source of content for the individual, what a firm support for every community, is the home where husband and wife live in mutual agreement and love, cherish and support each other, and are one in the moral conduct of life and the faithful fulfilment of duty! How great is the happiness for son and daughter to be members of such a household in which discipline and order, peace and love, intelligent and cultured harmony reign! what good fortune for themselves, and what a blessing for mankind reaching onward from generation to generation! What a refuge and protection, what a nursery for the wide-spread work of culture, is the state in which a free people, securely sheltered from outward harm and strengthened within by the spirit of order and by the concentration of all tasks and powers, can develop freely and live fully in accordance with its peculiar national characteristics! What proud joy in the Fatherland!—a joy which has been lacking so long among us Germans, and yet is a source of so much genuine virtue, and, more than anything else, renders men capable of great actions and of overcoming the narrow spirit of selfishness. What abundant consolation there is to many souls in the pious feelings of religious edification and exaltation! what

power of patience and endurance, in enthusiastic devotion to an Invisible and Eternal, to an ideal raised high above all finite limitations! How much noble enjoyment in works of art, what moral purification of the affections and passions, in disinterested contemplation of, and self-forgetful absorption in, representations of ideal beauty! And finally, think of the profound satisfaction of the mind that dives deep in the stream of scientific knowledge,—of the bright rays of light which, shining forth from the quiet study of the scholar, spread themselves abroad throughout the world, diffusing culture, dispelling darkness and obscurity, and freeing men's minds from the bonds of ignorance!

To show in detail wherein all these institutions and forms are valuable, and particularly to investigate the process by which they have been embraced in the moral code, is the noble and interesting function of a Social Ethic. Such an ethic is very closely related to the history of culture, and yet differs from it inasmuch as morality and culture are not identical. It is not the duty of a Social Ethic to inquire how all things have become what they are; its special task is to investigate the process of embodiment in a moral code and in the usages of human society. It thus becomes critical; and it invariably applies the test of the common welfare to the phenomena of civilisation, and measures these by their conformity to the moral ideal.

To take just one example of this, viz. punishment. Arising originally from the feeling of revenge, from the impulse and instinct of retaliation, punishment

was, in the interest of society for its self-preservation and peaceful development, taken out of the hands of the individual; and by that means the custom of vendetta, always productive of new evil, was superseded, the state henceforth exercising and organising the right of retribution. Thus personal revenge is replaced by a juster and more impersonal atonement, by the satisfaction of an ethical feeling wounded by the crime,—the sense of justice both of the individual and of the community. Moreover punishment has now become also an educational instrument deterring others from infringement of the law; and finally there is incorporated with it the aim of the reform of the criminal. Thus retribution, atonement, restraint, and reform are now included in punishment, and what a progressive humanising and moralising have we here of a primarily rude and unbridled, therefore an immoral, impulse of nature! Barbarous punishment does not reform, but on the contrary has a brutalising effect, and above all degrades the man whose office it is to execute the punishment; and so the form and manner too of its execution will have to become still more humane, more efficacious. But here there arise the critical questions: are men really improved by our methods of punishment? and if not, could not some more suitable methods be discovered? Would these questions be so eagerly discussed at present, if men had not become sensible of the ethical aims of punishment,—if they had not brought the policy of punishment within the province of ethics?

It is a hopeful feature of our times that there is *not*, as was lately maintained, 'a strong tendency to let morality sink to a low place in public estimation';<sup>1</sup> but that on the contrary the social-ethical position is energetically making its influence more and more felt; and that the moral duties of state and society are more and more earnestly apprehended and acknowledged. To carry this out in detail is the work of Social Ethics. Hence it is noteworthy that the most modern systematisers of ethics are thoroughly aware of this, and have accordingly allotted to social ethics the largest space in their expositions. In these the burning questions of the day are discussed in the greatest detail, not the least of them being the great social question which is pre-eminently a moral one. Manufacture has reduced millions of men to mere 'hands'; it is of importance that they should be raised again from this degradation as tools to the status and dignity of men. They have been much sinned against; therefore it is not enough to prescribe self-help to them, and state interference on their behalf is just and right. But this does not imply the satisfying of all the demands of the socialists; far less does it imply either on the one hand a *laissez faire* policy, or on the other the restraint by exceptional laws of free discussion of such proposals, whether they be justifiable hopes or impracticable utopian dreams; nor the combating of theories and ideas by police regulations and repressions. The repressive law too has an ethical, or rather a very

<sup>1</sup> MÜNSTERBERG : *Der Ursprung der Sittlichkeit*, 1889.

unethical, aspect, and acquits itself before the tribunal of morality no better than the treatment of the duel in our modern state.

Other problems of the most varied nature converge towards this social question as to a centre:—the question about the right of private property, which escapes liability to forfeiture only when the possessors are sensible of their duties, and which therefore in the view of ethics, while its moral value is fully acknowledged, cannot consistently be regarded as absolute and unlimited;—the danger of over-population, which cannot be averted by emigration solely, but above all by raising and ennobling the family life of the lower classes and by the removal of inveterate prejudices;—the problem of the emancipation of women, whose claims, in many ways so just, it is shameful to see still ever baffled for the sake of the comfort and selfishness of men;—the ever-widening chasm between the educated and uneducated, which indicates neglect of national education, and which, though not actually coincident with the division between believers and unbelievers,—still more hurtful because it leads to so much untruth,—yet touches it with what is, on that account, a more dangerous proximity.

In all these questions, cited for the sake of example, ethics shows at the same time that it is not flighty speculation, but that it is—cannot but be—a very genuine product of the times, and that it can hope to attain an influence over the times only when it understands their needs and perceives what is wanting and

what is needful; when in short nothing human remains alien to it. Of course it is not for me to follow this out in detail, since we have here to do only with characteristics and outlines. Therefore I will select from the profusion of problems only three which are of more especial significance and are suited to show morality in its relation to those spheres of life which lie nearest to it, viz. those of the State, of the Church, and of Art; and even in these examples I shall only have time rather to propound questions than to give answers.

Morality and politics, reasons of state and conscience, we know how often they come into conflict, and have done so ever since the days of Antigone or—to keep on historical ground—since Themistocles. And yet in ancient times the identity of these two spheres was the rule and a matter of course; even by Aristotle ethics was included in politics. The Middle Ages were scarcely conscious of the problem; and yet a figure like *Rüdiger von Bechlar* in the *Nibelungenlied*, with his struggle between faith to his friend and loyalty to his master, shows the existence, even at that time, of such conflicts;—in the feuds between Emperor and Pope too many a conscience must have passed through severe tribulation. But not until in Machiavelli does the opposition appear distinct and clear; only then is it fully recognised by the theorists. Machiavelli severed not only politics and theology, but politics and morality also; and thus machiavellism, regarded apart from its historical background and

from the practice of the period and of its Italian home, has become the name for a political realism rejected by all adherents of moral idealism;—for the reckless, bold assertion of mere political utility;—and for the application to the conduct of the statesman or prince of the tenet that the end justifies any immoral means. And yet it may with apparent paradox be said that Machiavelli had a more moral influence than all other political authors, precisely because he threw such a clear light on the incongruity between morals and politics and thereby indicated the filling up of this gulf as a task to be attempted, though not indeed admitting of complete fulfilment.

Nowadays indeed it is acknowledged that politics must be conducted in a spirit of morality, that statecraft must be in accordance with the generally accepted morality and its behests. But is it the case that it always is, or can be, so? Every war shows anew that the problem is still unsolved. For,—however necessary and morally justifiable war may appear in detail; although it may sometimes even have a beneficial effect, as a storm clears the air; although it may develop many virtues such as courage, heroism, self-sacrifice and patience in suffering;—it remains nevertheless an evil,—the fruit of guilt and injustice on one side or on both. Thus in the preceding lecture, when considering necessary falsehoods, we had to concede this resource to the statesman,—the right and duty to have recourse to deception in exceptional circumstances in the service of his country. But



although the individual may be exonerated, such a state of matters indicates an unsound condition of the whole, an immoral relation between nations and states,—something which ought not to be and which demands progressive alteration and redress. Thus it may be said generally: the necessity for morality in politics is recognised in principle, but is an ideal not as yet realised; and it is the business of the unprejudiced historian to show to what extent we continuously approach this ideal. But on the other hand politics, with its exceptions qualified by the relations of nations, has such and so varied a power over their moral life that the latter conforms in many respects to the prevailing political views, and even theory has to make allowance for them. But in all circumstances an immoral policy, either home or foreign, corrupts the moral life of the nation. Therefore *caveant consules!*

Politics is an affair of the state; the state is a moral institution, and hence the source of a series of special virtues. Patriotism and consciousness of one's obligation to the state are eminent political virtues, and in view of these the saying that politics corrupts the character is a frivolous or at least a very one-sided and foolish statement. To identify one's-self with one's nation, to devote one's-self to one's people and country; if necessary, to sacrifice possessions and life to them,—that is surely the most decided contrast to immoral egotism, the surest test of virtuous disposition. Hence to train up a child to be a good servant of his native land, to cultivate in him a

spirit of patriotism, a sense of his duty to the state, is a truly moral education, undoubtedly an education in virtue. And the more comprehensive the duties of the state become in our own times, the further it extends the limits of its activity, the more it becomes national, and so also more socialistic,—so much the more is it bound to have regard to the ethical culture of the people, because it can reckon on unselfish devotion only from morally educated men.

Yet here too doubts and difficulties threaten us. We know how long we Germans have been lacking in consciousness of duty to the state and in patriotism, because we possessed neither state nor country. Even our intellectual heroes of the end of the eighteenth century preferred to be cosmopolitans rather than citizens, and Lessing in one passage writes point-blank: 'The praise of being an ardent patriot is to my mind the very last thing that I should covet; . . . I have no idea at all of love of the Fatherland, and it seems to me at best but an heroical weakness, which I can very readily dispense with.'<sup>1</sup> Nowadays this abstract cosmopolitanism has lost credit, and justly so. The more immediate sphere of our native land claims from us more active allegiance than the wide round of common humanity, on which indeed the individual can scarcely have any direct influence. And thus it comes about that there is but too easily concealed beneath this cosmopolitanism a cold heart and a vagrant disposition towards distant and uncertain objects, rather

<sup>1</sup> *Briefe*.

than to faithful activity in a narrower sphere. For us to-day therefore morality is scarcely any longer conceivable without that supporting background of state and Fatherland in whose service we stand.

Nevertheless, this newly attained sense of citizenship and nationality has its morally questionable aspect, and often I cannot help thinking that the nearer we Germans approach the attainment of the great blessing of being a united powerful state the more rapidly does this moral danger draw near us. We are threatened with a certain narrowness in home as well as in foreign affairs, with a want of understanding of the significance of freedom and liberality in the best sense of the words. Here this leads to that unreasoning party passion which sees and despises every one of a different opinion as an 'enemy of the empire,' and to a certain idolatry of institutions and persons which is often difficult to distinguish from byzantianism and servility. There again it leads to chauvinism and the narrow-minded supercilious lack of comprehension of what is common to humanity wherever we meet with it,—and to an unamiable exclusiveness which gradually increases to hostility and must finally lead to a catastrophe. To this humanity, in the good, simple, and original sense of the word—not a cosmopolitanism of local growth—forms a necessary counterpoise; and if our nation would cling to this rich inheritance from times differently constituted, but also noble and great, its individual members might perhaps appear somewhat less 'keen,' but we

should be more cultured, stronger and freer internally, and above all we should be more ourselves, more German. For I cannot see, in spite of all chauvinistic prating, why, because we have become a great and united nation, we should belie our best qualities, tolerance and openness to understand others, why we should belie or yield one jot of our German idealism.

But tolerance is required in another sphere too—in religion. As to morality and religion, it has often been asked whether an atheist can be moral? Atheist—a foolish word, to which Goethe has given the only just rejoinder:—

‘ Who dare name him ?  
And who profess :  
I believe in him ?  
Who can feel  
And yet presume to say :  
I believe him not ? ’<sup>1</sup>

Let us then abandon that form of the inquiry, and ask rather whether morality is possible *without* religion? I once met that question with this other: whether morality can be combined *with* religion? I was at that time misunderstood in various ways, and yet the one conception corresponds precisely with the other. Whether a man can exist at all without religion is a question which we are not called upon to decide here; perhaps those who are denominated atheists and unbelievers have often more of the divine fire in them than many of whom official ecclesiasticism is proud as of its own children. But if we take the word

<sup>1</sup> *Faust*.

religion in its current sense, then experience shows undeniably that morality without religion is possible, and, equally so, religion without morality. And yet we should deceive ourselves were we hence to conclude that these two spheres have nothing in common. Not only have they at various times gone hand in hand historically, but psychologically too the fact holds good that man's nature is not so sharply divided into sections that one of these sections can be cultivated without influencing all the others. Thus the chief question to be considered is that of the relation between the two spheres. It is undeniable that certain virtues are developed most easily and nobly on a religious basis, and that a religious frame of mind can—but does not necessarily—give to the whole man a certain sensitiveness and tenderness of disposition which offers a peculiarly favourable soil for the development of such virtues, and invests the flowers which blossom there with a peculiarly delicate fragrance.<sup>1</sup> But on the other hand dogma and love do not exactly coincide. Dogma has a narrowing tendency and makes men one-sided; and so we find in religiously constituted men, above all in natures of feeble intelligence or in strong-willed characters, a certain harshness and im-

<sup>1</sup> 'If it be true, as I believe it is, that it is through our moral consciousness that we reach an insight into what is most essential and inspiring in religious faith, it is none the less true that this religious faith, when once awakened, more than repays the debt it owes to Ethics, by kindling in the soul an emotional fervour, a lofty moral enthusiasm, which mightily reinforces the will in its struggle to realise its ethical ideal.'—PROFESSOR UPTON: *Religion and Ethics*.

patience, a zealotry and fanaticism which is not abashed or scrupulous in its choice of means;—or else we find that quietism which is content with dogma and sacrifices good works to it, and which is satisfied to know that it is easier to be a pious enthusiast than to lead a good life. Thus it may be said: to many morality is possible only in the form of piety, although one should be careful not to extend this statement to all, nor to have it in one's mouth until it becomes no longer true; for others, piety is at least an ornament and a grace to their morality. But at no time up to the present has the dispute between dogma and love been adjusted, and hence the continued danger which threatens moral life from the side of religion,—hence the abundant immorality disguised in the forms and trappings of religion. Hence too it is that very many men prefer to be moral without religion, and succeed in being so.

But of course the religious man will not admit this, because the dogma of the impossibility of salvation except through his faith contracts his vision and warps the impartiality of his judgment. We, however, who are liberal-minded, must be more tolerant; we must not only maintain and insist upon our right to acquit ourselves of our moral tasks and duties without the support of a hereafter, but we must also acknowledge and value the great and good effects of religion on the moral life of nations, and the noble and pleasing fruits of genuine piety in individual men. For Höffding is quite right when he says: 'If

the freethinker does not excel the orthodox in sympathy, and in historical and psychological comprehension of the spiritual life, then his merely negative criticism is not sufficient to give him real superiority.' And I agree also with the further idea which he expresses as follows: 'So long as the opposition exists between the orthodox and freethinkers, there will always be found a continual interaction of the two tendencies; some feelings and conceptions are favoured by one bias, others by the other; and if these feelings and conceptions are really of importance in human life, then they must be adopted by that class of mind which has not itself produced them.' Liberal-minded men then will not roughly repudiate the orthodox, but rather learn from their virtues; and perchance then they too in time will learn from the former a little more tolerance and justice, moral qualities which are peculiarly becoming in him who is in possession of power.

Finally, we have to consider the relation of morality to art, of the morally good to the æsthetically beautiful. The Beautiful and the Good:—since Plato we have been familiar with their close relationship, and even so modern a writer as Herbart declares ethics to be a part of æsthetics. Whether the Beautiful is invariably also good, whether the Good is necessarily also beautiful, is the question here, and indeed a very practical question.

You may perhaps recollect a lawsuit which ran a lengthy course in Berlin a few years ago, and

which has a close bearing on the discussion of the principle of this relation. The matter in question was the connection of a great painter with his model. In order to be qualified to return a just verdict, the judges had not only to make themselves acquainted with the use and wont in the circles of the artistic world, but also to place themselves in the position of the soul of the painter, in order to understand what form the world of morality assumes in the soul preoccupied with beauty. And as we must emphatically reject the claim made on this occasion as so often before on behalf of the artist for a special code of morality, for an exceptional moral position, for the right to set at nought law and custom; we must on the other hand as strongly insist that the artist cannot be estimated off-hand by the standards of a childish, vulgar, or pedantic code of morality: to him too must be conceded the privilege of a special individuality.

Yet this examination of the morality of the artist is proportionally easy and simple as compared with the problem of the moral judgment of works of art. At first one might be inclined to reject any such judgment and isolate the Beautiful, separate it from the Ethical. But the unity of man's nature here again raises a protest. Granted that the æsthetically insignificant may be in many ways morally indifferent, yet it must be admitted that whatever is important in art affects the whole being of man; its æsthetic influence therefore cannot be isolated. Further we know that, in



the drama for instance, moral action may be the direct object of dramatic representation, as in the cases of *Antigone*, *Iphigenie*, *Wallenstein*. In such cases, the mind and spirit in which the moral action is regarded are of importance in the estimation of a work of art: the influence of the work of art is seen to be directly dependent on the view taken of the moral action; not on the conception of the artist only, but in no small degree on the view of the public to whom it is presented. Here of course all the differences in morality and culture that pervade, influence, and differentiate the mass of recipients come into question. That in which one man sees nothing bad is to another an enormity; that which one critic holds the highest morality another declares to be basely immoral. Recollect for instance the dispute, which has become for us almost unintelligible, about Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* (*Elective Affinities*), or the present burning question of the propriety and value of the French dramas of adultery. One might be at first inclined to say that the artist has no need to pay any attention to all that; if critics understand him falsely or not at all, that is their own concern. And certainly it is right that the artist should not be over-anxious: a romance writer or novelist who presents us with moral problems is not called upon to consider whether his 'immoral' novels may not perhaps arouse evil tendencies in half grown-up girls. It is the business of parents to prevent such books from falling into the hands of their children; the artist cannot be expected to exercise

pedagogic restraint in this sense. But how then if the feelings and views, not of children but of the adults—or of the majority of them—for whom the work of art is intended, are wounded and offended? To whom does it fall to judge in such circumstances? Have not educational considerations of a higher and more general kind to be looked to? Here the question arises, especially regarding public spectacles and performances, whether the state has not the right and the duty to exercise control? all the more as it is spurious art which speculates so much on the evil impulses and inclinations of the people. Against this such a moral control is certainly justifiable and fair; but there is no little danger attending it. The questionable result is that not only may a truly beautiful and artistic work be endangered by an unintelligent and uncultivated body of critics, as we experience from time to time in shocking or in laughable instances, but above all that by such a policy art itself may be placed in a false position, restricted in its freedom by political tendencies, and misused for inartistic purposes.

But on the other hand, art too has in itself an educational significance and mission. Schiller indeed went too far with his conception of 'the stage as a moral institution'; but no one will wish to deny or undervalue the influence of the artistic life of a nation on its moral conceptions. Our moral ideals, as well as our entire view of life, are formed in many respects by the influence of the writings of our poets; tragedy especially has even an ethically purifying power, as

no one has doubted since the time of Aristotle. So here too the relation is one of interaction :—modified by history, it may be full of blessings for one people and at one period, but for another people or at another time, of disastrous import. The ideal is clear : the perfect æsthetic influence must be also perfectly ethical. But have we ever a perfect work of art,—are our artists ever the children of such a perfect time as would give them power to create such perfect works of art? No ; therefore Schiller's words addressed to artists are as valid as ever :—

‘Man's dignity is trusted to your hands ;  
See that you guard it well !  
With you it sinks ! with you will rise again ! ’<sup>1</sup>

And we who do not æsthetically create but only enjoy works of art? Obtuseness for the Beautiful always indicates the lack of an ideal conception of life generally, and also ethical vacuity and barrenness. The other extreme however is equally questionable and dangerous. Art is a recreation. He who *only* plays, he who *only* enjoys, is lost to the earnestness of life; he becomes weak and effeminate, powerless either for work or for resistance of evil. Such above all is the effect of an excess of music ; and hence it is a moral mischief at the present time that so many of our educated women devote their time exclusively to this art, most inaccessible to ethical views and influences. In particular the romantic music of Wagner, which first lulls the understanding to sleep so as to awaken the

<sup>1</sup> *Die Künstler.*

senses the more keenly, makes us apprehensive for the preservation of moral dignity. For the artist, his art is at the same time his work ; but for us, who only receive and enjoy it, it should be only recreation. But it is a moral recreation, because æsthetic pleasure, being disinterested, helps to preserve us from selfish thoughts, and because art teaches us to understand life, and inclines us to be tolerant and gentle even towards guilt and sin. Finally, it is moral because it raises us to a feeling of our common humanity and opens a way, through the medium of the senses, for the entrance into the heart of all the best and most ideal influences that can possess and touch the human soul in every sphere of life,—therefore in the moral.

## CONCLUSION

I HAVE apparently made a digression from my subject: we were to consider the Supreme Good, and I have been speaking of the relations of morality to the country and to the state, to religion and to art. But we already know that the Supreme Good is the sum and substance of those common possessions which, in so far as they are imbued with the spirit of morality, combine with all that is highest and best in ourselves; and hence is not to be sought in the individual, nor as any special possession of the individual, but in those great achievements of civilisation in which every individual has to take his place, and in the advantages of which each may rightly claim a share, inasmuch as it is his duty to aid in these achievements according to the measure of his power, his capacities, and his self-sacrifice. The Supreme Good is accordingly a problem of SOCIAL ETHICS, and the question is whether we can find a general and concise expression for it. The social conception of morality has been our guide from the first in these inquiries. In erecting the principle of the general welfare as the objective standard of morality, we recognised morality as a social product and its principle as a social principle. Thus at the very outset

we gave to morality a social application, and individual ethics became subservient to social ethics. But moreover, the question which could not be solved on the basis of individual morality—the question of the Supreme Good—is answered by our inquiries, and was virtually answered from the first. The welfare of all is the aim, as well as the standard and principle, of all ethics,—it is the SUPREME GOOD. But it is significant that in place of ‘the welfare of *all*’ we have come to substitute the more modest expression: ‘the *greatest possible* welfare of the *greatest possible* number.’ In this modification the entirely relative and finite nature of human existence, even in its moral aspect, becomes apparent:—the Supreme Good is an ideal which is never—can never be—attained. Not only does civilisation never complete its task, not only does this culture-morality never attain more than an approximate realisation, but in the very nature of culture itself there lies a certain recklessness as to results; to it too applies what Schiller says of Fate,—that in raising man it crushes him. Let us express this more directly: the welfare of all requires sacrifice from each individual, renunciation of personal happiness and prosperity. That is the inward self-contradiction which we have already recognised in the idea of the Supreme Good,—it is that continual opposition between the individual and the whole, between morality and happiness,—an opposition which no *Deus ex machina*, no hereafter, has the power ever to reconcile or banish from the world. To be moral means to be self-sacrificing, and each man

can gain a share of the Supreme Good only in proportion to his strength and disposition to renounce his own personal well-being.

But that which we cannot realise as a whole may yet perhaps be approximately attained; and thus in conclusion the question arises: Whether humanity as such becomes more moral and more happy under the influence of progressive civilisation? Whether civilisation contributes to the improvement of our morality and to the increase of our happiness?

We know with what a display of rhetorical pathos Rousseau negatives the first question, and the Pessimists of the present day the second. I can now in conclusion only touch upon this opposition between optimism and pessimism; the dispute about happiness I may in the present connection lay entirely aside, and shall only endeavour to give a brief answer to the first question,—Whether is evil an increasing or a decreasing quantity in the world?

Pessimism, in considering this problem, maintains the first position and assures us that man deteriorates in proportion as he quits the state of nature; that culture, as it with essential necessity destroys happiness and adds to suffering, so also does it increase the iniquity of man from generation to generation. Rousseau builds this up on the dream of a paradisaical state of nature, full of innocence and goodness of heart, purity and virtue. We know that this is an empty dream which vanishes before the light of experience; a romance, hollow like all romance, of which we find an unlooked-

for revival in pessimism, which still remains an unwholesome element in the active life of our times. We know this; but granted that there is nothing in this primitive innocence, and as little in the bliss of Paradise or in the fable of a golden age, yet a progressive deterioration of manners might still be the result of actual historical development.

Direct observation and estimate are indeed impossible here. Who would undertake to determine whether the Greeks, Romans, or French are the best men? whether the Germans have conducted themselves more morally in ancient times, in the middle ages, or in modern times? Entire periods of the world's history indeed appear to us especially vicious and degenerate—certain centuries or decades of Roman history, for instance, or that French society over which the Revolution broke as a just Nemesis. But we do not feel ourselves in any way called upon to pass—nor should we be justified in passing—judgment on *all* times and on the rise or fall of an *entire* race. Thus there remains only the indirect inquiry,—Whether it lies in the nature of advancing civilisation to deteriorate morals? Rousseau affirms this when he says at the beginning of *Emile*: ‘All is good as it proceeds from the hands of the Author of all things; all degenerates in the hands of man,’ and when he expresses his opinion that culture gives encouragement and predominance to ignoble and selfish instincts. That this is not the only possible aspect of the matter is shown by John Stuart Mill, that very judicious observer, who is of opinion that



almost every honourable quality of humanity is a product, not of instinct, but of a triumph over instinct, therefore of civilisation. Courage, purity, self-control, truthfulness, justice, are, he says, simply virtues wrought out and acquired by education and art. We know how true this is. Morality is a social phenomenon, therefore a product of civilisation. Nevertheless his assertion too must be pronounced one-sided. Civilisation is not identical with morality; it is only being slowly penetrated and controlled by the ethical principle. Thus Mill overlooks the specifically moral fruits of civilisation; and it is a question whether the vices of a refined civilisation are not more repulsive to our feelings than the undisguised outbreaks of rude barbarity and unbridled violence,

Civilisation certainly brings vices in its train as well as virtues; evil-doing becomes by means of it more self-cognisant and more subtle; but, on the other hand, the means of overcoming evil are increased by education, legislation, the administration of justice, by the awakening of the sense of justice and truth, of sympathy and humanity; and thus indeed virtues of all kinds are developed and called into life. Since optimism and pessimism can with equal justice appeal to such historical facts of life, both are equally right and wrong, both equally undemonstrable.

There is yet a third opinion, which Paulsen represents, that with increase of civilisation, a progressive divergence and individualisation on both sides takes place, the mass of mankind remaining in an indeter-

minate medium, not far removed from the zero point at which the lower animals stand, while in individual personalities both Good and Evil become more and more prominently and distinctly manifest. This opinion cannot be corroborated by facts. Whether humanity progresses in Good, or retrogresses, or remains ever stationary as a whole though with individual divergence in both directions,—which of these three hypotheses we adopt depends on subjective disposition and difference of temperament. If anywhere, it is to this point that Fichte's saying applies: 'A man's philosophy depends on what the man himself is. For a philosophical system is not a dead piece of house gear which may be laid aside or taken up at pleasure, but it is animated by the soul of the man who holds it.'

But failure to solve problems always suggests the idea that possibly they may not have been properly stated. And so it may be that we, having here to do with morality, ought not to ask what the course of human development *is*;—that we cannot know, because that development is never completed, and we can never survey it as a whole, since its first beginnings are concealed from the cognisance of history. Not what it *is* therefore but what it *ought* to be, we may and must ask.

Let us state the question so: Who can endure the thought that the import of our spiritual and moral life, taken as a whole, is after all a mere futility? Who,—if he believes that all work of civilisation on a large

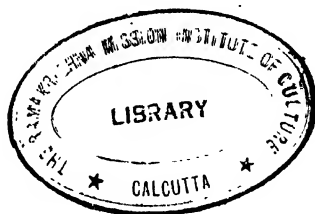
scale is in vain,—can desire to labour for an improvement and enlightenment that are after all unprofitable? —Who that believes this can risk and sacrifice himself, his individuality, his personal happiness, to aid a progress which is in truth no progress,—to contribute to a welfare which in reality only oscillates backwards and forwards to and from zero? Indeed who can take so much as even a theoretical interest in the course of the world and its development in civilisation, if it seems to him nothing but a continuous sinking into darkness, or an eternal stagnation without meaning or import? For what can such a differentiation, which alters nothing in the long run, lead to but just back to a supernatural day of judgment and the old heaven and hell? This we cannot *know*,—we cannot *know* either the first, second, or third view. But one thing we must *believe*,—and this optimistic faith is not only compatible with recognition of all the dark shadows of existence, but arises directly from such a recognition,—we must believe that the world is moving forwards, and that there is such a thing as a moral order of the universe, carried out, slowly indeed and imperceptibly, by that immanent law of morality according to which evil-doing, as it is isolated and egotistical, is the weaker power, bearing within itself the seed of subjection and decay; while the Good on the other hand is a healthy and prevailing power, proving itself the stronger in the struggle for existence, and to which therefore the victory belongs—the victory assuredly, so long as there are men and a world history. Only in this faith can we devote

ourselves with full energy to the service of the Good, only in this faith can we do our duty unquestioningly and joyfully, sacrificing if necessary our personal interests to the Supreme Good, which is none other than that living garment of God which Humanity, the true *Erd-Geist*, must fashion and weave at the roaring loom of Time.

What the final conclusion, the goal, of history may be I know not, nor does any one know. We know only this: even if cosmic physics should be right in telling us that after thousands and thousands of years humanity must cease to exist because the sun will be extinguished and the earth frozen up, our life would not thereby be hindered during those thousands of years. Is it not rather doubly, trebly, true in this connection, if anywhere, that the living man claims the first place? And besides the Present, all Past belongs to us;—it makes the life of humanity ever more significant and worthy from generation to generation. The Future belongs to us only in so far as we can make sure that posterity may some day say of us: 'In their time progress was made in the Good; what they wrought at that sounding loom of Time has been no bad work.' Whether our ideas of the future are obscure or clear, sad or joyful, lies in our own hands and depends on our moral disposition and work. If we enter into the service of the Good and do our duty in the part assigned to us, then we may rejoice in anticipation over the page on which history will one day record and weigh the contribution of our generation towards the development of the civilisation of humanity.

And here too, in the work of to-day, we may find the highest for the individual also, as Faust, even in dying, bids the present moment stay, that he may enjoy the fair and blissful vision in which the fruits of his earthly life endure throughout the Ages.

Thus the Good is ever here in the Present, even when it looks forward to a better Future; immanent, even when its view is lost in countless æons. Those however who would seek to raise the veil of futurity and penetrate to remoter periods of time, and who would thus anticipate the goal of human history, I must refer to the Future itself.











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